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A METHODIST SAINT

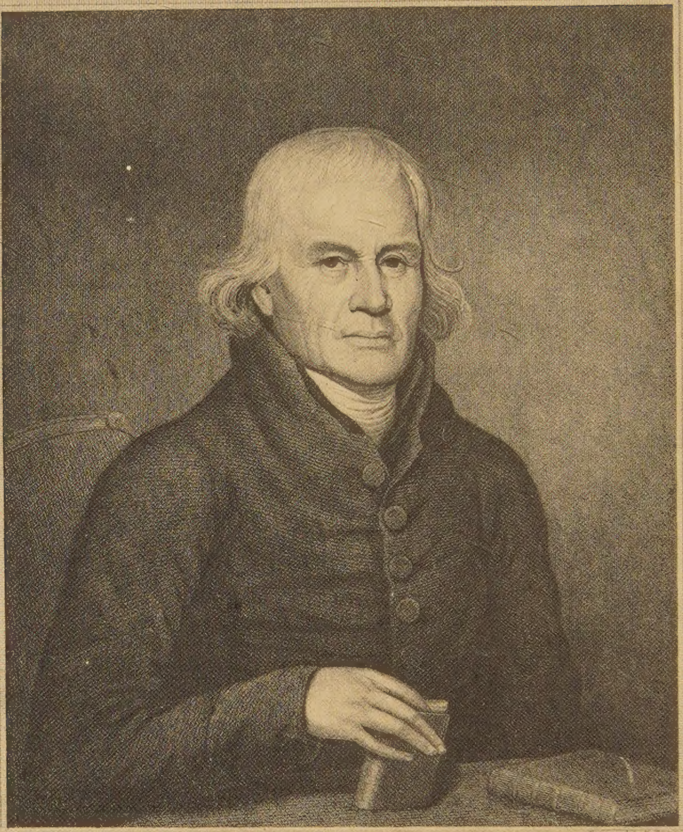
ALSO
BY HERBERT ASBURY

UP
FROM METHODISM

"HIS story is of his tortured boyhood in a community where the living word had frozen into cant, as it always does, given time.

He has done his work with a rushing scorn and anger that make it vivid reading."

— NEW YORK TIMES



Painted by J. Paradise

Engraved by B. Tanner

THE REVD. FRANCIS ASBURY,

Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in the United States.

Philadelphia Published 27th March 1814 by B. Tanner No. 74 South 8th Street

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A METHODIST SAINT

THE LIFE OF BISHOP ASBURY

BY HERBERT ASBURY

ILLUSTRATED

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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO MY SISTER
MARY ASBURY McKAY

Preface

IN writing the life of Francis Asbury it is necessary to write also, to a very great extent, the history of early American Methodism, for he was virtually its sole proprietor for nearly half a century. He is chiefly responsible for whatever the Methodist church is to-day in the United States; without his genius for organization and administration it is doubtful if it would have survived the perils and persecutions of the Revolution, or the schemes of Dr. Thomas Coke to deliver it over to the Episcopalians and the Church of England. Almost all of the important Methodist activities, including the publishing and educational movements and the far-reaching campaigns against liquor and slavery, now happily successful, were projected by Asbury; he gave them form and impetus, and since his death they have experienced only natural growth and development. He was unquestionably the greatest ecclesiastical organizer this country has produced, and no man has left a more definite imprint upon American religious culture. He influenced the beliefs and directed the worldly and spiritual lives of thousands in his own time, and of millions who came after him; and to-day there is scarcely a phase of our national life that is not touched, and in many instances controlled, by the holy octopus which he nurtured during the most critical period of its career.

Yet Francis Asbury has not been accorded his rightful place in American history, and his influence upon American civilization has not been properly estimated, although it was infinitely greater than that of the majority of the political and military leaders whose birthdays are clamorously celebrated, and with whose manifold virtues every schoolboy is familiar. In the secular accounts of the period Asbury is scarcely mentioned, and the historians of rival creeds dismiss him with patronizing references to the fact that he was not a university or college graduate. And the works by Methodist writers in which he is the central figure are generally unsatisfactory to the man of open mind, or non-Methodist, for the Wesleyan scholars have been blinded by the halo about his head, and tomes which began as narratives of Asbury's life and labours have ended as excellent biographies of the Holy Ghost. This attitude I have tried to avoid, for my chief interest lies not in the Holy Ghost but in the human attributes of Francis Asbury, and particularly in his passion for sanctification, and the amazing pertinacity with which he pursued it, undaunted by almost unbelievable mental and physical tortures.

I have also endeavoured to give proper consideration to the very unusual powers of the early itinerants who almost realized Asbury's plans for the Methodization of the American continent. These men have been shamefully neglected by secular historians, and by psychologists as well. There is no doubt that they were genuine magicians, for they exercised a coercive power over the Almighty, and bent the divine will to conform to the Wesleyan dogma; they prostrated sinners with a glance, and exorcized devils without resort to Romish ritual, which had hitherto been the only successful means of overcoming the infernal envoys. The secret of their might appears to have lain in a curious burning glitter of the eyes, a phenomenon which in all ages has been commonly accepted as an indication of magical or supernatural power. And there was scarcely an early Methodist preacher in whom it did not occur; in many it was the dominant physical characteristic. In the eyes of such celebrated evangelists as Lorenzo Dow and Benjamin Abbott the glitter was so intense that a single gleam sufficed to throw a sinner screaming to the ground, and a second glare invariably whirled him into convulsions. Other preachers, however, found it necessary to point a finger or utter such invocations as they had found to be efficacious. For example, Hezekiah Calvin Wooster customarily employed this formula: " Smite them, Lord! Smite them! " There is no record that the Lord ever refused.

The story of American Methodism during the time of Francis Asbury is a remarkable record of alternate wrangles and miracles. The power to wrangle has been retained, and has become an essential part of Methodistic procedure; indeed, constant practice has developed it so that it may now fairly be called an art. But the modern Methodist preacher is apparently incapable of performing the extraordinary feats which were of such frequent occurrence in the formative period of the church. In some quarters the suspicion has been expressed that miracles are constantly being performed at the national Capitol in Washington, and it is generally conceded that the Methodist adepts there have caused great fear and trembling, but their enchantments are not worthy of comparison with the marvellous exploits of the early evangelists. In the days of Francis Asbury and John Wesley it was common enough for preachers to cast spells of such potency that sinners fell to the floor and writhed in convulsions, but thus far there is no authentic report that even a Congressman has had a fit under present-day Wesleyan magic. However, it is not improbable that such things may again become common, for the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals has for some years been engaged in extensive research for more effective magical formulæ, and recent experiments indicate that important discoveries have been made.

H. A.

New York
December 25, 1926.

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A Methodist Saint

CHAPTER I

God So Loved the World

I

FRANCIS ASBURY was born on August 20 or 21, 1745, near the foot of Hampstead Bridge in Handsworth parish, about four miles from Birmingham, in Staffordshire, England. He was the son of Joseph and Elizabeth Asbury. When his mother was pregnant God appeared to her in a vision and told her that her child would be a boy and that the lad was destined to become a great religious leader and spread the Gospel among the heathen, although He did not specify the Americans. She was greatly impressed by this sign of divine interest in her offspring, and saw also much significance in the fact that her husband was called Joseph, which was the name of the temporal father of Jesus. From the moment of Francis Asbury's birth she began to prepare him for the fulfilment of the heavenly plan. Although she had attended the Wesleyan meetings and had taken part in their boisterous and exhausting ceremonies, she had not then joined the Methodist Society, and she had in mind for her son to take orders in the Church of England. She was ambitious for him to become Archbishop of Canterbury, and as such the spiritual head of Great Britain. Had she been a Catholic, she would have pointed him for the papacy.

When the boy was an infant, she began his religious education, reading the Bible to him for an hour each day, and singing hymns and praying over him another hour. Her favourite scriptural readings were the bloody horrors of the Old Testament, and those portions of the gospels which describe the agonies of Christ bleeding on the cross. The hymns she loved and sang were those of Isaac Watts and the early works of Charles Wesley, which had an enormous circulation throughout the England of the period. Their themes were blood and suffering. One of the most popular was a famous composition by Watts which is still in great favour at Baptist and Methodist camp-meetings and revivals:

Alas! and did my Saviour bleed,
And did my Sovereign die?
Would he devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?
Thy body slain, sweet Jesus, thine,
And bathed in its own blood;
While all exposed to wrath divine,
The glorious sufferer stood.

Such songs as this were Francis Asbury's lullabies. When his speech was nothing but the meaningless mumblings of babyhood, his mother taught him to clasp his hands and look up to heaven, and address his childish confidences to God, who alone could understand them. When he was old enough to comprehend, she told him of heaven and hell, and of God and Jesus Christ and the fall of man. Her heaven was the poor man's paradise, with streets of gold and gates of pearl; it contained almost everything comfortable or luxurious that the poor man wants and cannot have on earth. Her hell was a literal inferno, presided over by the Satan whom the Christians and the Jews have borrowed from the religion of Zoroaster. It was populated by miserable sinners writhing in anguish over the everlasting fires, prodded and poked by devils wearing red tights, and adorned with wings, horns, and hoofs.

Elizabeth Asbury was a member of a Welsh family named Rogers, and as the wife of Joseph Asbury lived for several years a calm and worldly life, untouched by the storm of evangelical preaching which swept over England during the greater part of the eighteenth century under the fiery ministry of John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, John Cennick, and others. She was a communicant of the Church of England, as was her husband, but in her early life she was not particularly pious. She drifted with the spiritual tide, content to put her faith in the priests of the established church and trust to them to ease her pathway into heaven. But when her first child, Sarah, died in infancy, she turned to religion for relief from her sorrow and despair. She began to attend the preaching services of the district. she sought the society of pious people, and she began to read. She read religious works altogether; hour after hour she stood by her window poring over the Bible and the tracts and pamphlets which the Wesleyans and other sects scattered throughout England with a lavish hand. She spent much time in prayer and other devotional exercises, and opened her house to the class and band meetings of the various evangelical groups. Several years elapsed between the death of Sarah and the birth of Francis, and in that period Elizabeth Asbury became a religious enthusiast of almost fanatical fervour, weeping for the blood of Jesus, frantic for the favour of God, and continually crying for a direct sign of her ultimate salvation and participation in the glories of the hereafter. During these years she was under a terrific mental strain and in a chronic condition of emotional upheaval. Francis Asbury inherited from her an amazing passion for holiness, the morbidity which in later life sometimes developed into melancholia, and the zeal and pertinacity with which he laboured to attain sanctification and become a saint in the Methodist heaven. She died on January 6, 1802, at the age of eighty-seven or eighty-eight, and her son thus described her in his Journal:

> And here I may speak safely concerning my very dear mother; her character to me is well known. She lived a woman of the world until the death of her first and only daughter, Sarah Asbury. How would the bereaved mother weep and tell of the beauties and excellencies of her lost and lovely child, pondering on the past in the silent suffering of hopeless grief! This afflictive providence graciously terminated in the mother's conversion. When she saw herself a lost and wretched sinner, she sought religious people, but "in the time of this ignorance" few were "sound in the

> faith" or "faithful to the grace given." Many were the days she spent chiefly in reading and prayer. At length she found justifying grace and pardoning mercy. So dim was the light of truth around her, from the assurance she found, that she was at times inclined to believe in the final perseverance of the saints. For fifty years her hands, her house, her heart, were open to receive the people of God and the ministers of Christ, and thus a lamp was lighted in a dark place called Great Barr, in Great Britain. She was an afflicted yet most active woman, of quick bodily powers, and masculine understanding. Nevertheless, "so kindly all the elements were mixed in her," her strong mind quickly felt the subduing influences of that Christian sympathy which weeps with those who weep, and "rejoices with those who do rejoice." As a woman and a wife she was chaste, modest, blameless; as a mother (above all the women in the world would I claim her for my own) ardently affectionate; as a "mother in Israel," few of her sex have done more by a holy walk to live, and by personal labour to support the gospel, and to wash the saints' feet; as a friend she was generous, true, and constant.[1]

Joseph Asbury's contribution to his son's evangelical greatness appears to have been almost wholly biological. He was not actively religious; he permitted the gospel to be preached in his house, and he made no objection when his wife opened their doors to the class and band meetings of the Wesleyans and other dissenting societies, but he remained untouched by the divine spark. Apparently he was not a converted man, and if the theology of Methodism is correct, he could not have gone to heaven, unless the work of his son for the kingdom so impressed the Lord that celestial credit was established for the entire family. Nowhere in Francis Asbury's journal is there any mention of his father's having undergone that overwhelming emotional explosion which the Methodists call being born anew in Christ Jesus. Although a man of no learning, he seems to have possessed a strain of scepticism sufficiently strong to avoid being stampeded into the faith. He died in 1798, at the age of eighty-four or eighty-five. Of him Francis Asbury wrote:

> I now feel myself an orphan with respect to my father. Wounded memory recalls to mind what took place when I parted from him, nearly twenty-seven years next September — from a man that seldom, if ever, I saw weep; but when I came to America, overwhelmed with tears, with grief, he cried out: "I shall never see him again"; thus by prophecy or by providence he hath spoken what is fulfilled. For about thirty-nine years my father hath had the gospel preached in his house.[2]

2

Joseph Asbury was the son of Edward Asbury, and like his father tilled a small plot of ground, but his labours were not sufficient to provide for his family, and he was employed also as a farmer or gardener for two of the wealthiest families of Handsworth parish. He was industrious and laborious, but his viewpoint remained the hand-to-mouth viewpoint of the peasant, and so he never became a man of consequence and property. There were other Asburys in the neighbourhood, all more or less closely related. One family was very wealthy, with a coat of arms and many servants. One of their tenants was John Evans, the father of George Eliot.

Elizabeth Rogers was Joseph Asbury's second wife. When a very young man he married Susan Whipple, daughter of a farmer near Wednesbury, of whom nothing is known. She bore a son, called Thomas, and then died, and the child was reared by relatives. When he was fifteen, Thomas Asbury ran away to sea, shipping as a cabin-boy on a vessel plying between England and India. He returned an avowed infidel and a more or less abandoned sinner, and soon got into trouble. For this he was disowned by his father, and his name was not thereafter mentioned in Joseph Asbury's home. Nor does it appear in any of the writings of Francis Asbury.

The precise character and extent of Thomas Asbury's misdoings have never been definitely ascertained, but some of his descendants confess to a fond belief that he was a poacher, and the more optimistic and unregenerate among them insist that he may even have stolen a sheep. When he was in his early twenties, he came to America and settled in Virginia, where he became enamoured of Susan Jennings, of a family which claimed kinship with the Duke of Marlborough. But her father objected and carried her aboard ship, intending to take her back to England. The night before the vessel sailed Thomas Asbury boarded the craft as it lay at anchor, shot down the guard, and escaped with the girl into the forest. There they were cared for by friendly Indians, among whom they lived for several months. Susan Jennings's father having then abandoned her and sailed for England, Thomas Asbury brought her into the Virginia settlements and married her according to the rites of the Church of England. They settled in Fairfax County, where he begat sons and daughters. One of his sons was Daniel, who became a Methodist preacher and a presiding elder, and was a great organizer for the Wesleyans in Virginia and North Carolina.

Daniel Asbury inherited few of the characteristics of his father, but he had a strong infusion of the piety that so distinguished his uncle, and as a further parallel was converted at an early age. When he was fourteen, he was captured by the Indians, and lived with them some eight or ten years in Kentucky and other parts of the wilderness, escaping only after he had repaid them by converting the entire tribe to Christianity. He joined the travelling connexion of the Methodists in 1786, in Brunswick County, Virginia. This was then a part of the famous Brunswick circuit, the scene of one of the greatest of the revivals that followed the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church by Francis Asbury and Dr. Thomas Coke in 1784. In 1787 he and his wife, Nancy Morris Asbury, daughter of Lester Morris, a soldier of the Revolution, removed with other settlers to Lincoln County, North Carolina, and in 1790 the Lincoln circuit appeared in the list of Methodist appointments, with Daniel Asbury and Jesse Richardson as preachers. In 1791 Daniel Asbury organized Rehoboth

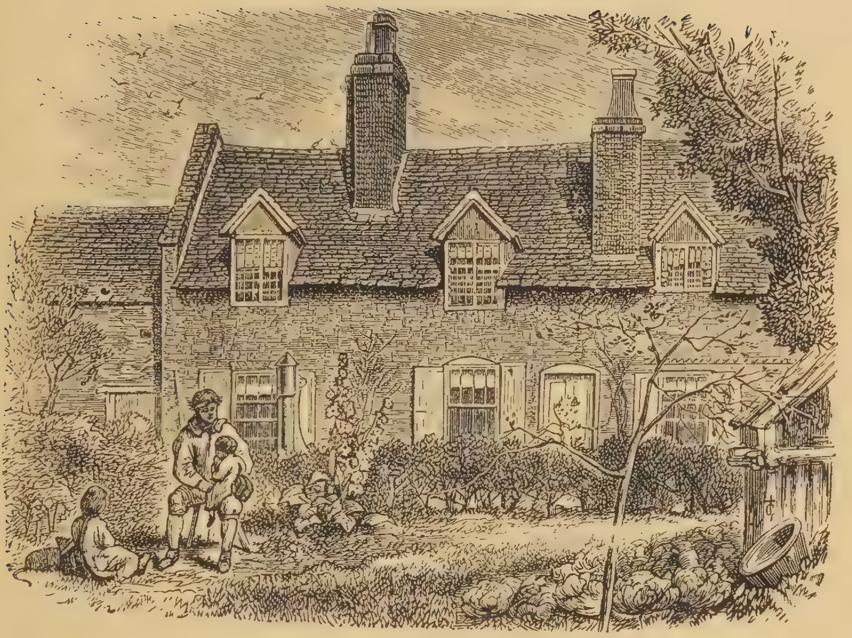
Church, the first Methodist congregation west of the Catawba River. He retired in 1824, leaving several sons who had joined the Methodist itinerancy. One of them was the Rev. William Morris Asbury, a local preacher and exhorter, who later left the ministry and removed to Mississippi. He was my grandfather.

3

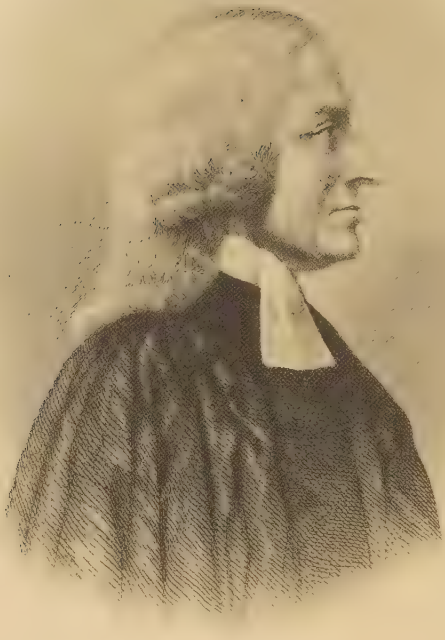
The immediate result of the training which Elizabeth Asbury gave her son under the command of Heaven was that Francis Asbury became a fearful, timid boy, morbidly introspective, fretting over religion and the likelihood of salvation. He was constantly afraid lest he do something to displease the awful, revengeful God of whom he had been taught. Writing in his Journal many years later in America, he recorded that in his childhood he "neither dared an oath nor hazarded a lie, but was always prayerful and religious." He learned a certain form of words for prayer, and one of his earliest recollections was of his mother urging his father to family Bible-readings and frequent supplication to the Almighty. He abhorred mischief and wickedness, and in the latter category put virtually everything that was amusing and pleasurable. In the society of other boys he found scant comfort; their light-heartedness irked him, and in after years he wrote that his juvenile companions were the vilest of the vile for lying, fighting, swearing, and whatever else their evil inclinations might lead them into. He was constantly being ridiculed and "picked on," and from the gatherings of his friends he frequently returned home uneasy and melancholy, convinced that the Lord had been affronted by their play and laughter. He never overcame this aversion to mirth; the Journal which he began to keep after he came to America contains many entries of self-reproach at an occasional tendency to joviality, and of denunciation of others because they dared laugh. Sometimes as a boy he was called "Methodist parson," on account of his pious lugubriousness, and because his mother always invited anyone who bore the appearance of religion to her house. " Methodist " was then a term of contempt, and the religious atmosphere of the Asbury cottage, and the evangelical excesses which often occurred there, became the subject of ribald comment throughout the village.

It was part of his mother's plan for his ecclesiastical greatness that he should receive a secular education, and he was sent to school early, having already learned to read the Bible under her instruction. This he could do at the age of six. But his school life was not happy. His master beat him cruelly, unable to understand this strange, solemn child whose destiny had been so clearly outlined by heavenly manifesto, and whose piety even then was remarkable. This filled the boy with such a dread of school that his father sent him to the home of one of the wealthiest families of the parish, where he lived for a year, probably employed as a page. But these people were ungodly as well as rich, and Francis Asbury became " exceedingly vain, but not openly wicked." When he returned home, school still had no charm for him, and at the age of thirteen and a half he was apprenticed " to learn a branch of business at which I wrought about six years and a half. During this time I enjoyed great liberty, and in the family was treated more like a son and an equal than an apprentice."

The nature of this work has always been in dispute among Methodist writers. The Rev. Alexander McCaine, who in later years was a travelling companion of Francis Asbury and who wrote a history of the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, says that he learned the trade of a button maker. Bishop DuBose says he was apprenticed to a buckle maker, and Dr. Ezra Squier Tipple, quoting from Briggs's *Life of Asbury,* an English work, says he went to work for a blacksmith named Foxall, who was at the head of a smithy in a great forge that had been set up a short distance from the home of Joseph Asbury. Foxall was a Methodist from Monmouthshire, and may have been the first person to direct Francis Asbury's attention toward the teachings of John Wesley. But Asbury, in his own account of his conversion, does not mention Foxall and gives him no credit whatever. He wrote:



Reputed Birth-Place of Francis Asbury



John Wesley

> Soon after I entered on that business God sent a pious man, not a Methodist, into our neighbourhood, and my mother invited him to our house; by his conversation and prayers I was awakened before I was fourteen years of age. It was now easy and pleasing to leave my company, and I began to pray morning and evening.[3]

Under the influence of this man, and of his mother, the boy soon became dissatisfied with the preaching of the parish priest, and went to West Bromwich Church, where he heard the Rev. Edward Stillingfleet and such noted preachers as Ryland, Venn, Hawes, Talbot, and Mansfield. They were principally Calvinistic Methodists, and with George Whitefield had come into Staffordshire under the patronage of the Earl of Dartmouth, founder of Dartmouth College, and the Countess of Huntington, both among the first converts to Methodism, although they never embraced the Arminian doctrines of John and Charles Wesley. Stillingfleet was rector of West Bromwich parish, but he had strong Methodist sympathies, and it is recorded that both he and his curate, the Rev. Mr. Bagnall, preached with " almost Methodistic plainness, fidelity, and fervour." Stillingfleet often attended the evangelistic services in the castles of the Earl and the Countess, and the travelling preachers he met there were invited to occupy his pulpit.

These men were experienced evangelists, and past masters of the art of arousing religious enthusiasm. Their preaching caused Francis Asbury much concern. He became even more serious and frightened, and increased his reflections upon the state of his soul and the probability of his salvation. He began to read the sermons of Whitefield and Cennick, and it was not long before he inquired of his mother " who, what, and where were the Methodists." She gave him a favourable account and directed him to a neighbour who went regularly to Wednesbury, some ten miles north of Birmingham, to hear them. With this person Francis Asbury rode to Wednesbury and listened to his first real Methodist preaching, and experienced his first personal contact with the emotional enthusiasm of the Wesleyans.

The town of Wednesbury was in the southern part of Staffordshire, in the heart of the Black Country, so called partly because of the dirt and dust of the collieries and partly because of the manners and customs of the inhabitants, who devoted themselves almost entirely to fighting and gin-drinking. It is notable in Methodist history as the scene of some of the most violent persecutions met with by the Wesleyan itinerants, and was probably one of the worst sections, from a moral and religious viewpoint, in the whole of England. The priests of the Established Church incited the people against the Methodists, and the first preachers to visit Wednesbury were attacked by a rabble and stoned. Later the mob, which was summoned by a horn every time a Wesleyan preacher rode into the town, destroyed the houses of the Methodists and beat the adherents of the strange new religion.

Nevertheless, the Methodists flourished, and when John and Charles Wesley made a preaching tour through Staffordshire in 1743, they found a society of some three hundred members, most of them reformed drunkards and fighters, but as enthusiastic now for religion as they had previously been for gin. The Wesleys preached at Wednesbury and at Walsall, and in each town they were attacked and beaten. At Walsall, while preaching on the steps of the Market House, Charles Wesley was knocked down and came near being trampled to death. He was rescued by a Methodist woman who felled four men with a bludgeon. At Wednesbury the mob surrounded John Wesley and marched him before a Justice of the Peace, where he was accused of preaching without authority, and of luring people from their beds at five o'clock in the morning to pray and read the Bible. The Justice said that Wesley had done no wrong and advised the mob to go home, whereupon Wesley immediately began to preach to his captors, with such success that he was escorted in triumph back to Wednesbury and again permitted to harangue the crowd. But that night another mob tried to burn the house in which the preachers had found lodging, and they narrowly escaped serious injury. For many years no Methodist itinerant was safe in the neighbourhood, but eventually, as in the Kingswood colliery district, where Wesley founded a school, Methodism triumphed and Staffordshire became a stronghold of the faith.

The first Methodist sermons that Francis Asbury heard in Wednesbury were preached by John Fletcher and Benjamin Ingham, both ordained ministers of the Church of England, but converts to the beliefs of John Wesley. Fletcher is one of the great figures of Methodist history. He was a Swiss by birth, the son of an officer of the French Army. His real name was Jean Guillaume de la Flechere. He was educated at Geneva, and after sundry adventures in Spain and Portugal arrived in England in 1752, obtaining employment as a private tutor in the family of a country gentleman of Shropshire. He began to ponder on religion, and on a visit to London heard of the Methodists and joined the Wesleyan society at the Old Foundry. Later he Anglicized his name, took clerical orders in the Church of England, and became Vicar of Madelay, a poor parish in the Black Country. There he came under the influence of the Countess of Huntington, and for a time was president of the theological seminary which she established. But he later resigned on account of disputes over her Calvinistic doctrines, and espoused the cause of Wesley in the controversy with George Whitefield.

Fletcher practised asceticism in its most violent forms. He lived entirely on vegetables and for a long period ate nothing but milk and bread. Two nights of each week he remained awake all night, reading, praying, and meditating on religious matters, and on other nights did not permit himself to sleep so long as he could keep his attention on the book before him. At last, however, he became so frail and impoverished that he was compelled to abandon this mode of living, and settle down to a more rational existence. Fletcher's principal writings were a series of papers called *Checks to Antinomianism*. They had much to do with the collapse of that doctrine, which had a great vogue during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and threatened the lives of the early evangelical religions. It was first taught by John Agricola in Germany in 1535, and was afterwards partly, if not wholly, embraced by the Moravians of Count Zinzendorf. The adherents of Antinomianism held that there is no sin in believers, and that faith freed the Christian from the claims and obligations of the moral law. It was thus explained in the Minutes of the first Wesleyan Conference:

> Question. What is Antinomianism?
>
> Answer. The doctrine which makes void the law through faith.
>
> Question. What are the main pillars thereof?
>
> Answer. 1. That Christ abolished the moral law. 2. That therefore Christians are not obliged to observe it. 3. That one branch of Christian liberty is liberty from obeying the commandments of God. 4. That it is bondage to do a thing because it is commanded, or forbear it because it is forbidden. 5. That the believer is not obliged to use the ordinances of God, or to do good works. 6. That a preacher should not exhort to good works; not unbelievers, because it is hurtful; not believers, because it is useless.[4]

Antinomianism is seldom heard of now, but in the early days of Methodism it was an issue of the utmost importance. Many books were written for and against it, and it caused almost as much dissension among opposing factions of Wesleyans as the doctrine of election, upon which George Whitefield broke with the Wesleys.

Benjamin Ingham was one of the original Methodists, a member of the Holy Club which gave birth to Methodism, and a man of the utmost piety. He joined the Wesleyans about two years after he became a student at Queen's College, Oxford, and in 1735 was ordained a priest of the Church of England by Bishop Potter. He accompanied John and Charles Wesley and C. Delamotte to Georgia, and upon their return to England went with John Wesley on a pilgrimage to the Moravian colony of Count Zinzendorf at Herrnhut, where he became thoroughly imbued with Moravian doctrine and philosophy. The net result of this was that he became doubtful what to believe, and during the rest of his life floundered back and forth between the Moravians and the Methodists, preaching vigorously for first one and then the other. He founded Wesleyan societies in Yorkshire, where he became famous as an evangelist, but later turned his congregations over to the Moravians. In 1753, however, he returned to Methodism and was given the church at Todcaster. But he soon quarrelled with Wesley over the latter's Arminianism, and allied himself with Whitefield and the Countess of Huntington, and with the former preached against the Wesleyan doctrine of free grace.

But Francis Asbury, at thirteen or fourteen years of age, was not interested in doctrinal disputes nor in the discussions of Antinomianism. He was by nature an Arminian, and appears to have been unaffected by the sermons of Whitefield in so far as they advocated Calvinistic theories. In Antinomianism he seems never to have had the least interest; it was repugnant to him from the beginning, and after he became old enough to understand its philosophy he characterized it as a "wild doctrine." But both Fletcher and Ingham made tremendous impressions upon him; the former became one of his heroes and doubtless had a great deal to do with his own efforts to become an ascetic. Of the effect of the preaching of Fletcher, Ingham, and other early Methodists upon him he left this account:

> I soon found that this was not the Church, but it was better. The people were so devout, men and women kneeling down, saying: "Amen!" Now, behold, they were singing hymns, sweet sound! Why, strange to tell, the preacher had no prayer book, and yet he prayed wonderfully! What was yet more extraordinary, the man took his text, and had no sermon book; thought I, this is wonderful, indeed! It is certainly a strange way, but the best way. He talked about confidence, assurance, etc., of which all my flights and hopes fell short. I had no deep convictions, nor had I committed any deep-known sins. At one sermon, some time after, my companion was powerfully wrought upon. I was exceedingly grieved that I could not weep like him, yet I knew myself to be in a state of unbelief. On a certain time when we were

> praying in my father's barn, I believed the Lord pardoned my sins and justified my soul; but my companions reasoned me out of this belief, saying: "Mr. Mather said that a believer was as happy as if he were in heaven." I thought I was not as happy as I would be there, and gave up my confidence, and that for months; yet I was happy, free from guilt and fear, and had power over sin, and felt great inward joy.[5]

The Mather to whom Asbury referred, and under whose preaching he was definitely converted, was Alexander Mather, the son of a baker of Brechin, in Scotland. When he was nineteen, Mather was disowned by his father because he had joined the Scottish rebels, and went to London, where he obtained employment in the bakery of a London Methodist. Through this man he learned of the Wesleyans, and soon afterwards married and joined the Old Foundry Society. Some time later he became convinced that God had called him to preach. His first sermon was not a success, for he forgot his text, and then spoke with such haste that no one could understand him. But he improved, and at length was sent by Wesley on a roving commission to save souls. In 1760, when Asbury was about fifteen years old, Mather held a series of revival meetings at Wednesbury and other towns of the Black Country, and many felt the power of the Methodist Lord. Of his experience under Mather's preaching Asbury wrote:

> Young as I was, the word of God soon made deep impressions on my heart, which brought me to Jesus Christ, who graciously justified my guilty soul through faith in his precious blood, and soon showed me the excellency and necessity of holiness. About sixteen I experienced a marvellous display of the grace of God, which some might think was full of sanctification.[6]

Soon after Asbury's first visit to the Methodist meeting-houses at Wednesbury, he began to gather with other Methodists for reading and prayer, and, he wrote later, "had good and large meetings and were much persecuted, until the persons at whose houses we held them were afraid, and they were discontinued."

He then held frequent meetings in his father's house, exhorting the people, and several persons professed to find conversion through his labours, although he had not yet begun to preach. His mother took him once a fortnight to a gathering of women which she conducted, and he was permitted to read the Bible aloud and give out the hymns. Subsequently, after reading, he ventured to exhort, and to expound and paraphrase a little on the portion read. So began his gospel labours, when a lad of sixteen or seventeen. He wrote in his Journal:

> I had preached some months before I publicly appeared in the Methodist meeting houses: when my labours became more public and extensive, some were amazed, not knowing how I had exercised elsewhere. Behold me now a local preacher; the humble and willing servant of any and every preacher who called on me by night or by day; being ready, with hasty steps, to go far and wide to do good; visiting Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and indeed almost every place within my reach, for the sake of precious souls; generally three, four, and five times a week, and at the same time pursuing my calling. I think when I was between twenty-one and twenty-two years of age I gave myself up to God and his work, after acting as a local preacher near the space of five years. Some time after I obtained a clear witness of my acceptance with God, the Lord showed me, in the heat of youth and youthful blood, the evil of my heart. For a short time I enjoyed, as I thought, the pure and perfect love of God; but this happy frame did not long continue, although at seasons I was much blessed.[7]

4

Francis Asbury laboured for several years as a local preacher on the Black Country circuits near his home, and in 1766, when he was twenty-one, substituted for W. Orp, the travelling preacher on the Staffordshire and Gloucestershire circuits. He then resolved to abandon his secular employment and devote himself wholly to the spread of salvation as revealed to the Methodists. But like John Wesley he remained a communicant of the Church of England, and resorted to it for the sacraments. He did not leave the Establishment until Dr. Thomas Coke, under divine authority from Wesley, laid hands on him and consecrated him superintendent, or bishop, of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

About the middle of 1767 Asbury went to London and, having given the Wesleys satisfactory proof of his fitness for the ministry, was admitted to the connexion on trial at the twenty-fourth annual Conference on August 18, a few days before his twenty-second birthday. His first assignment was as helper on his home circuit in Staffordshire, and thither he went, well schooled in Methodist theology and practice and vested with all the authority bestowed by John Wesley upon his preachers. The following year he was helper on the Gloucestershire circuit, and in the early part of 1769 travelled in Bedfordshire and Sussex, with occasional forays into the districts which he had previously served. At the Conference of 1769 he was appointed assistant in charge of the Northamptonshire circuit, and in 1770 was sent to Wiltshire.

The accusations most frequently made against Asbury after he came to America were that he was dictatorial and bossy, and ambitious for power and renown, and determined to dominate the American connexion. Even John Wesley reproved him, though unjustly, for strutting and putting on airs, and calling himself bishop; and the first schism in American Methodism grew out of the conviction of James O'Kelley of Virginia, an excitable and unstable itinerant, that he was attempting to organize an Asburyan instead of a Methodist church. This attitude frequently coloured his labours, and in his middle life was regretfully referred to by his friend, the Rev. Dr. Devereaux Jarratt, rector of the Episcopal parish of Bath, in Virginia, and a leader in the great Virginia revivals of the latter part of the eighteenth century. Dr. Jarratt wrote: " Mr. Asbury is the most indefatigable man in his travels and variety of labours of any I am acquainted with, and though his strong passion for superiority and thirst for domination may contribute not a little to this, yet I hope he is chiefly influenced by more laudable motives." [8]

These traits of character were unquestionably the fruits of his early training and of his mother's constant predictions of and admonitions to ecclesiastical greatness. There is evidence that their development began before he left England. He appears to have tried to take matters in his own hand while substituting for Orp in Staffordshire, and to have disobeyed Wesley's command not to ramble all round. In May of that year Orp wrote to him:

> Dear Frank: After having so firmly engaged you to supply Hampton and Billbrook at the end of the week, I could not but be surprised to hear you had turned dictator. Certainly you must either think I was not able to see the places properly filled, or else that I am fickle and inconstant, and therefore you expect to hear my new mind. I take this opportunity of informing you that I shall not be at those places, and shall expect you to see them supplied in due time. It is true that another preacher is come, but he goes immediately into the low round; in the mean time I wish you would hearken to these verses of Hesiod:
>
> Let him attend his charge, and careful trace
> The right-lin'd furrow, gaze no more around;
> But have his mind employed upon the work.
>
> Then I should hope to hear that your profiting would appear unto all men. You have lost enough already by gazing all around; for God's sake do so no more. I wish I could see you on your return from Hampton on Sunday evening. I shall be at Wednesbury if it please God. I have a little concern to mention. I hope you'll call.[9]

America was much in the public mind of England at this time, and during the early part of 1771 Asbury began to have strong intimations that in the new world lay the pathway to holiness, and the ecclesiastical fame for which his mother had been preparing him. This matter he " laid before the Lord, being unwilling to do my own will, or to run before I was sent." The reply was favourable, and when the Conference of 1771 convened at Bristol on August 7, he and Richard Wright volunteered as missionaries to the Americans. They were accepted, and Asbury went back to Staffordshire to say good-bye to his family, returning a few weeks later to Bristol. There he delivered his last sermon on English soil, the only one of his discourses in his native land of which any part has been preserved. He preached from the second verse of the Sixty-first Psalm, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed." This was the outline of the sermon: "1. Where should the missionary herald be? The end of the earth. 2. And whose heart should be overwhelmed, swallowed up, if not the heart of him to whom a dispensation of the Gospel is committed? 3. And whence should he look for succour but to Christ, the Rock that is higher than he? 4. How should he obtain that succour but by constant, fervent prayer?"

On September 4, 1771, Asbury and Wright set sail for Philadelphia from the Port of Pill, near Bristol, and the former began to keep the Journal in which he made almost daily entries for the next forty-five years, and which is perhaps the best record extant of the development of American Methodism and of Asbury's rise to power. Eight days later, having recovered from an attack of sea-sickness which had prostrated him for several days, he set down his reasons for going to America and his belief that the Methodist teachings were of God:

> Sept. 12. I will set down a few things that lie on my mind. Whither am I going? To the New World. What to do? To gain honour? No, if I know my own heart. To get money? No; I am going to live to God, and to bring others so to do. In America there has been a work of God; some moving first among the Friends, but in time it declined; likewise by the Presbyterians, but among them also it declined. The people God owns in England are the Methodists. The doctrines they preach, and the discipline they enforce, are, I believe, the purest of any people now in the world. The Lord has greatly blessed these doctrines and this

discipline in the three kingdoms; they must therefore be pleasing to him. If God does not acknowledge me in America, I will soon return to England. I know my views are upright now; may they never be otherwise![10]

Of the voyage his Journal gives this account:

Sept. 15. I preached on Acts xvii.30: " But God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." The sailors behaved with decency. My heart's desire and prayer for them was, and is, that they may be saved; but oh, the deep ignorance and insensibility of the human heart. The wind blowing a gale, the ship turned up and down, and from side to side, in a manner very painful to one that was not accustomed to sailing; but when Jesus is in the ship, all is well. Oh, what would one not do, what would he not suffer, to be useful to souls, and to the will of his great Master! Lord, help me to give thee my heart now and for ever.

Our friends had forgotten our beds, or else did not know we should want such things; so I had two blankets for mine. I found it hard to lodge on little more than boards. I want faith, courage, patience, meekness, love. When others suffer so much for their temporal interests, surely I may suffer a little for the glory of God, and the good of souls. May my Lord preserve me in an upright intention! I find I talk more than is profitable. Surely my soul is among lions. I feel my spirit bound to the New World, and my heart united to the people, though unknown; and have great cause to believe that I am not running before I am sent. The more troubles I meet with, the more convinced I am that I am doing the will of God.

In the course of my passage I read Sellon's *Answer to Elisha Cole on the Sovereignty of God;* and, I think, no one that reads it deliberately can afterward be a Calvinist.

Sept. 22. I preached to the ship's company on John iii.23; but, alas! they were insensible creatures. My heart has been much pained on their account. I spent my time chiefly in retirement, and in reading the *Appeals,* Mr. De Renty's *Life,* part of Mr. Norris's works, Mr. Edwards on *The Work of*

God in New England, The Pilgrim's Progress, the Bible, and Mr. Wesley's *Sermons*. I feel a strong desire to be given up to God, body, soul, time, and talents, far more than heretofore. . . .

Sept. 29. I preached to the ship's company again, on these words, "To you is the word of this salvation sent." I felt some drawing of soul toward them, but saw no fruit. Yet still I must go on. While they will hear I will preach as I have opportunity. My judgment is with the Lord, I must keep in the path of duty. . . .

Oct. 6. Though it was very rough, I preached on deck to all our ship's company, from Hebrews ii.3; "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" The Lord enabled me to speak plainly, and I had some hopes that the interesting truths of the gospel did enter into their minds. I remember the words of the wise man: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand." As to my own mind, I long and pray that I may be more spiritual. But in this I comfort myself that my intention is upright, and that I have the cause of God at heart. But I want to stand complete in all the will of God, "holy as He that hath called me is holy, in all manner of conversation." At times I can retire and pour out my soul to God, and feel some meltings of heart. My spirit mourns and hungers and thirsts after entire devotion. . . .

Oct. 13. Though it was very windy, I fixed my back against the mizzen-mast, and preached freely on those well-known words, 2 Corinthians v.20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." I felt the power of truth on my own soul, but still, alas! saw no visible fruit; but my witness is in heaven, that I have not shunned to declare to them all the counsel of God. Many have been my trials in the course of this voyage; from the want of a proper bed and proper provisions, from sickness, and from being surrounded with men and women ignorant of God, and very wicked. But all this is nothing. If I cannot bear this, what have I learned? Oh, I have reason to be much ashamed of many things, which I speak and do before God and man. Lord, pardon my manifold defects and failures in duty. . . .

Oct. 27. This day we landed in Philadelphia.[11]

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[1] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 504.

[2] Asbury: *Journal*; Vol. II, p. 381.

[3] Ibid., p. 158.

[4] Southey: *Life of Wesley*; Vol. II, p. 166.

[5] Asbury: *Journal*; Vol. II, p. 159.

[6] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 70.

[7] Asbury: *Journal*; Vol. II, pp. 159–160.

[8] Atkinson: *History of the Origin of the Wesleyan Movement in America*, p. 288.

[9] Tipple: *Francis Asbury; The Prophet of the Long Road*, p. 51.

[10] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 2.

[11] Ibid., pp. 3–5.

CHAPTER II

Genesis

1

IN the beginning Charles Wesley created Methodism by the establishment of the Holy Club at Oxford University, but it was without form, and void, for Charles Wesley was a mystic and a poet, and lacked the power to transform his theories into a living religion. But upon the face of these faintly stirring waters moved his brother John, whose ability as an organizer and administrator has been approached by no other Methodist except Francis Asbury. To him fell the task of developing the creed. He made the laws and rules of Methodism and formulated its dogma, but Charles Wesley wrote its songs, giving to the Methodist psalmody such famous hymns as " Jesus, Lover of My Soul," " Hark! The Herald Angels Sing! " " Come, Thou Almighty King," and hundreds of others. His poetic output comprised some seven thousand works, of which about six hundred have been set to music, a few by no less a composer than Handel.

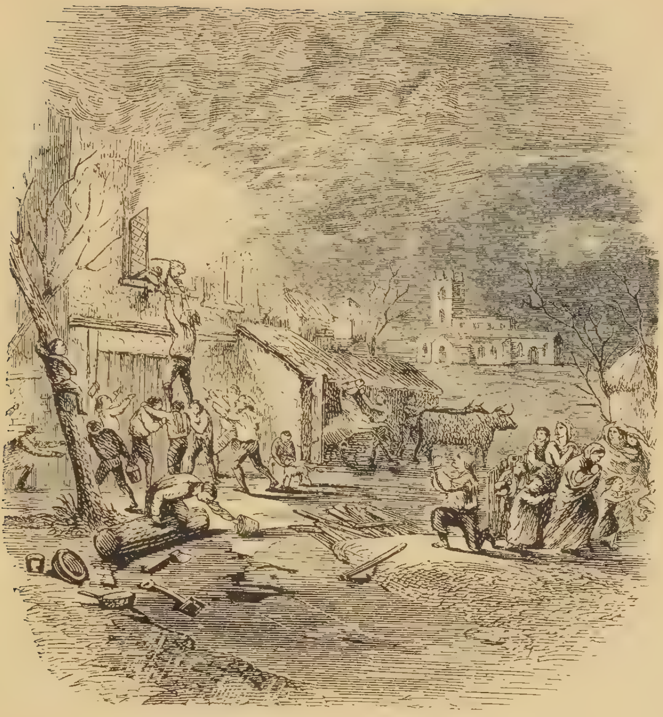
Both brothers were born at Epworth, a market town in the Lindsey division of Lincolnshire, England, John on June 17, 1703, and Charles on December 18, 1708. Their father, was rector of Epworth parish, and had also the small living of Wroote, in the same shire. The Wesleys came from a long line of dissenting clergymen, and for several generations on both sides of the family there had been a strain of pronounced religious fanaticism. Their great-grandfather, the Rev. Bartholomew Wesley, rector of Catherston and Charrmouth, became known as the " fanatical parson " because of the vigour of his opposition to the Established Church, and the fervour of his beliefs. With hundreds of other ministers he was ejected from his livings by the operation of the Five Mile Act, promulgated when Charles II became King of England. His son, the grandfather of the heroes of Methodism, called himself John Westley. He was educated for the priesthood at Oxford, and in 1658, the year of Oliver Cromwell's death, became rector of Whitchurch in Shropshire. He was removed by the Act of Uniformity and became an outcast and a wanderer, going from town to town preaching on the final perseverance of the saints, an important tenet of Calvinistic doctrine.

The father of John and Charles Wesley, the Rev. Samuel Westley, was educated at Newington Green Academy, a private school operated by the dissenters, and at Oxford. At the Academy he had as schoolmates Daniel Defoe and another lad named Crusoe. He broke with the dissenters following his ordination as a clergyman of the Church of England, and thereafter fought them vigorously, a compliment which they returned. He was a prolific poet, and is said to have made it a rule to write at least twenty lines of verse a day. He was appointed to the chaplainship of a regiment when one of his poems pleased the Duke of Marlborough, but was dismissed through the efforts of the dissenting clergy. Later he wrote a poem in defence of the Revolution, and dedicated it to Queen Mary, who rewarded him with the parish of Epworth. When he removed to his new charge, he left the *t* out of his name and called himself Samuel Wesley.

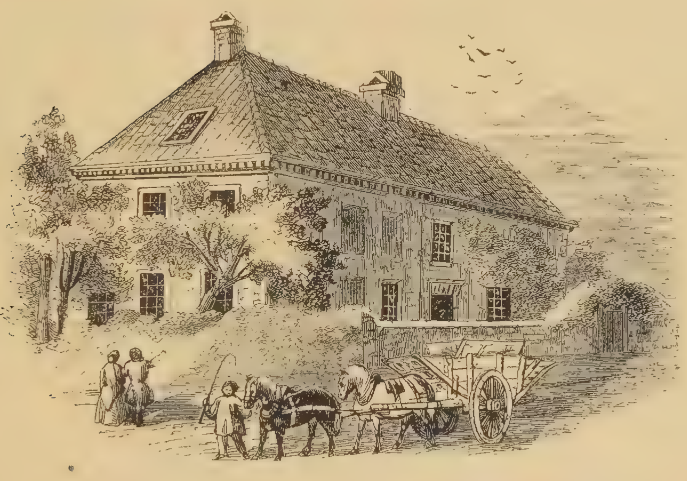
Samuel Wesley's wife was Sussanah Annesley, the fifth daughter of Dr. Samuel Annesley, an LL.D of Oxford and a pious clergyman of great renown. He also lost his parish by the Act of Uniformity, but leased a meeting-house in London and continued to preach. Daniel Defoe became a member of his congregation and wrote a long biographical poem about him. He gave his daughter a good education, and she added to it a mind that was distinctly her own. She differed with her husband on many points of religious and political doctrine. But she was nevertheless an obedient and dutiful wife, and he did not discover her attitude until a morning when she failed to say "Amen" to his prayer for King William. She told him that she did not believe William was the rightful sovereign. This so shocked the good rector that he forthwith left his house and went to London, where he remained for a year without communicating with his family, returning to Epworth only when King William died. John Wesley was their first child after this separation. They had nineteen children altogether.

There was an element of the miraculous about the birth of Charles Wesley. His mother was delivered of him before the appointed time, and he appeared to be dead; he neither opened his eyes nor cried. For some time there were no signs of life, but at length Mrs. Wesley detected a faint heart-beat. She resolved to try to save the infant, and he was accordingly wrapped in soft wool and laid aside, with neither food nor drink. He thus remained apparently lifeless for several days, until the moment came when he should have been born according to due process of nature. He then opened his eyes and cried, and behaved in every respect like a new-born babe.[1] He was immediately given nourishment, and thereafter lived a normal and rational life until he went to Oxford University and was converted, at which time the Lord appeared to him in a vision, a phenomenon not unusual in the spiritual rebirth of a Methodist.

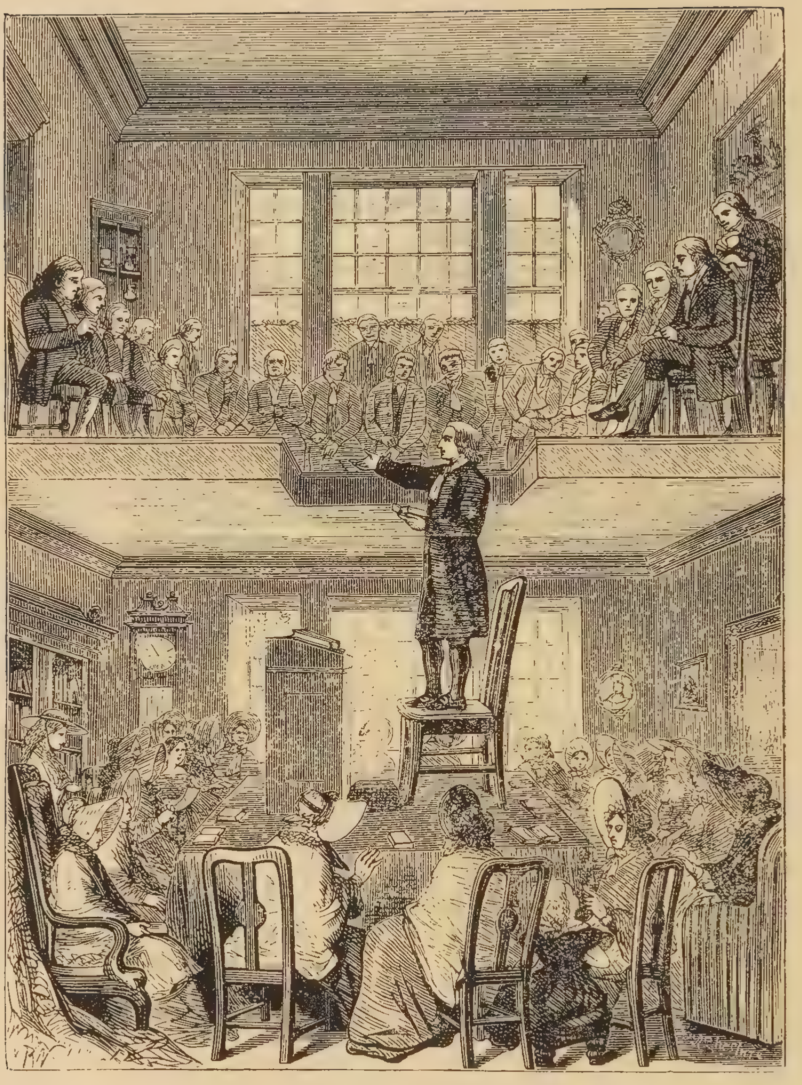
The story of John Wesley's birth and early life has nothing to match this, but devout Methodists profess to see the hand of God in his rescue from a fire that destroyed Epworth rectory in 1709, and in the narrow escape of his mother. The Rev. Samuel Wesley's parishioners were peculiarly profligate, and when he showed great zeal in admonishing them of their sins, they attempted twice to set his house on fire. The third time they succeeded, and the building flared into flames at midnight. Mr. Wesley was aroused by an outcry in the street, and tried to warn his numerous brood and escort them to the street in safety. But the door was locked and could not be opened immediately, and several of the children clambered through a downstairs window; others went through a little door into the garden. Mrs. Wesley, unable to



A Brand Plucked from the Burning



Epworth Rectory—the Haunt of Old Jeffrey



An Early Methodist Meeting-House

reach the garden, attempted three times to face the flames, but each time was forced back by their scorching heat. She then dropped to her knees and besought the aid of Jesus Christ, and immediately felt a startling sensation, and was convinced that she would not be injured. She got to her feet and waded through the fire, which burned her clothing from her body but did not touch her flesh.

Meanwhile John Wesley, then about six years old, had been forgotten. His father finally heard him crying in the nursery, but the stairs had been burned, and the boy could not be reached. Mr. Wesley fell upon his knees in the hall and commended the soul of the child to God, and then went outside and again knelt in prayer. John called for the nurse to take him up, thinking the bright light meant that day had come, and when no one answered, he opened the curtains and saw streaks of fire. He climbed upon a chest which stood before a window and was seen from the yard. His father and mother implored God to save him, but meanwhile two peasants ran to the house. One climbed to the shoulders of the other and plucked the boy from the burning window-sill. A moment later the window fell in.[2]

The next day, Mr. Wesley walked through the ruins of his home, and came upon a single leaf from his polyglot Bible, on which just these words were legible: *Vade, vende omnia quæ habes, et attolle crucem, et sequere me* — " Go sell all that thou hast, and take up thy cross, and follow me." John Wesley was always greatly affected by his rescue and in after years had a picture painted to commemorate the event. On the margin of the painting he wrote: " Is not this a brand plucked from the burning? "

The rectory was rebuilt within the next year, and the new building also became the scene of startling occurrences, the most notable being the appearance of a goblin, or demon, called Old Jeffrey, which haunted the house for several months. Old Jeffrey first appeared at Epworth in the latter part of the year 1715, when the housemaid heard several dismal groans from the dining-room, although no living person was there. A few nights later the Wesleys heard strange knockings, which continued night after night. Usually there were three or four knocks at a time in different parts of the house, indicating that Old Jeffrey may have had accomplices. Every member of the family heard them except Mr. Wesley, and since it was well known that such things presaged the death of the person to whom they were inaudible, he was not told. His wife and children, however, were greatly alarmed, and prayers were offered for his safety. But eventually he heard them, and the Wesleys felt great relief.

Twice Old Jeffrey appeared in person. Once Mrs. Wesley saw him run from beneath a bed in the form of a badger, and again the man-servant, Robin Brown, chased him from behind the oven, where he had been huddling close to the fire, finding the warmth, perhaps, more homelike. This time Old Jeffrey was a rabbit; he hurried out of the house with his ears flat against his body and his little tail standing straight up. But between these two manifestations there were a variety of noises and disturbing incidents. There was the sound of bottles being dashed to pieces, of footsteps going up and down stairs, of dancing in an empty room, the gobbling of a turkey-cock and knockings about the beds and all over the house. Once the elder Wesley heard nine loud and distinct knocks, and then several deep groans, and then nine more knocks, with a pause at every third knock. He spoke to the goblin, which replied with three knocks.

The Wesleys tried to drive Old Jeffrey from the rectory by blowing a horn half a day and performing other popular incantations, but the demon was offended and made the succeeding night hideous with his noise. None but Mr. Wesley ever felt the demon. He was thrice pushed out of the way as Old Jeffrey hurried about his diabolical business, a high wind going by immediately afterwards. Such a wind usually accompanied the noises; it whistled around the house and through the rooms, and sometimes it went ahead of members of the family and opened doors for them. Once or twice when Mr. Wesley spoke to the goblin he heard two or three feeble squeaks, a little louder than the chirping of a bird, but not as loud as the noise of a rat. The family dog, a mastiff purchased expressly to repel the intruder, was afraid of Old Jeffrey, and invariably crawled under a bed and howled when the demon made its appearance.

The manifestations of the Epworth demon were not unlike those attributed to the Poltergeist, a belief which is still widespread in many parts of Germany and the Balkans. It was the subject of much correspondence between members of the Wesley family,[3] and has been considered at great length by Methodist historians. An account of Old Jeffrey's doings was prepared by John Wesley and published in the *Arminian Magazine,* the official organ of the Methodists.[4] Robert Southey, perhaps the most critical of Wesley's biographers, concluded that Old Jeffrey was plainly a Jacobite goblin, as he nearly always interrupted the family worship when Mr. Wesley attempted to pray for the King of England or the Prince of Wales. Many Methodist writers, however, contend that the manifestations were of divine origin, and that through them the Lord was conveying, in some mysterious manner, the information that He intended to call John Wesley to a great work. However, no explanation has been offered as to why the Lord should have appeared as a whistling wind or a rabbit with his tail in the air.

Samuel, the eldest child of the Wesleys, who was eleven years older than John, was the first of the family to take clerical orders. Samuel could not speak at all until he was four years old, and it was feared that he would prove to be mentally defective, or at least dumb, but at the age of four he suddenly astonished his father and mother by giving a remarkably erudite answer to a question asked of another person, and he thereafter had no difficulty in speaking.[5] He was educated at Westminster and then at Oxford, returning to the former school as an usher or assistant teacher. Later be became a clergyman, but never joined the Methodists, and does not appear to have been very proud of the achievements of his illustrious brothers. When he first heard of John Wesley's conversion and excessive piety, he wrote: "I do not hold it at all unlikely that perpetual intenseness of thought, and want of sleep, may have disordered my brother. I have been told that the Quakers' introversion of thought has ended in madness; it is a studious stopping of every thought as fast as it arises, in order to receive the Spirit. I wish the canting fellows had never had any followers among us, who talk of indwellings, experiences, getting into Christ, etc., etc. . . . I pleased myself with the expectation of seeing Jack; but now that is over and I am afraid of it. I know not where to direct to him, or where he is. I heartily pray to God to stop the progress of this lunacy." [6]

Charles Wesley received his early education under his brother at Westminster. John Wesley entered the Charter House School at the age of eleven, after five years of instruction by his mother at Epworth, nearly all of which was religious in character. Mrs. Wesley took especial pains to give him such a training. In 1720, at the age of seventeen, he was admitted to Christ Church, the most aristocratic and fashionable of the Oxford colleges. Charles followed him six years later, but it was not until 1729 that the Holy Club was formed and the Methodistic movement begun.

2

The state of morals and religion in the England which saw the early development of Methodism, and into which Francis Asbury was born, was very low. The stage was decadent, and the royal court and the castles of the nobility reeked with licentiousness. The popular literature of the day was provided by such writers as Fielding, Smollett, and Congreve, and the deistic writings of Hume, Gibbon, Hobbes, and Bolingbroke were widely circulated and had a powerful effect upon English minds, as did the works of Voltaire and Rousseau, then rising to prominence in French thought. Everywhere there was open infidelity and scorn of the church and religion. Religious writers say that the darkest period in the religious annals of England was that prior to the preaching of George Whitefield and the Wesleys; the godly authors of the time joined in a wail of lament at the irreligion and immorality they saw all around them.

Drunkenness was widespread throughout the Kingdom. In London in 1736, three years before the first Methodist society was established, every sixth house was a gin mill, and their signboards advertised that they would make a man drunk for a penny and dead drunk for twopence. They also provided free straw for the drunkard to lie upon while he was recovering from the effects of his potations, and a morning dram to mitigate the horrors of the hang-over. From these places bands of thugs and hoodlums sallied forth each evening, and committed every sort of wrong upon peaceful citizens and their property, running innocent people through with their swords and sometimes torturing them. Similar conditions prevailed elsewhere, and the coal-mining districts of Kingswood and of Staffordshire were in particular great strongholds of wickedness.

The universities and colleges seethed with notions of deism and atheism, these ideas becoming so popular that in 1729 the heads of Oxford issued a notice deploring the spread of deism among the students and urging that they be more carefully instructed in theology. The priests of the Church of England were for the most part worldly men, and did little or nothing to check the general feeling of irreligion. Their attitude was generally that of the Bishop of Chichester, who wrote to a young clergyman: " Name me any one of the men famed for learning in this or the last age who have seriously turned themselves to the study of the Scriptures. A happy emendation on a passage in a pagan writer, that a modest man would blush at, will do you more credit and be of more service to you than the most useful employment of your time upon the Scriptures, unless you resolve to conceal your sentiment and speak always with the vulgar." [7]

The Rev. Augustus M. Toplady, a notable opponent of the Wesleys and author of the famous hymn " Rock of Ages," said in a sermon in 1778, shortly before his death, that in 1730 a converted minister in the Church of England was as great a wonder as a comet. In 1724 the Bishop of Litchfield said: " The Lord's day is now the devil's market day. More lewdness, more drunkenness, more quarrels and murders, more sin, is contrived and committed on this day than on all the other days of the week together. Sin, in general, is grown so hardened and rampant that immoralities are defended; yes, justified on principle. Every kind of sin has found a writer to teach and vindicate it, and a bookseller and hawker to divulge and spread it." [8] In the preface to his *Analogy* Bishop Butler said that it had come to be taken for granted that Christianity was no longer a subject for inquiry, but had at length been disclosed to be fictitious.

However, Methodism was preparing to remedy this state of affairs.

3

John Wesley was ordained a priest of the Church of England by Bishop Potter of Oxford in the fall of 1725, and a year later obtained a fellowship at Lincoln College, the smallest and most scholarly of the Oxford group. He removed to Lincoln at once, while Charles remained at Christ Church. When he entered Oxford, John Wesley had already begun to fret over religion and he became more and more anxious for his spiritual welfare. But all of his activities were devoted to his own soul; he had not then acquired that avid interest in the souls of others which has since changed the whole current of Protestant religion. A Methodist writer says:

> It had been John Wesley's intention to spend his life at Oxford in efforts to save his soul. This was all the time uppermost in his mind. He studied the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures to save his soul; he fasted and prayed to save his soul; he preached in churches and taught in prisons to save his soul; he fed the hungry and naked to save his soul; he led a life of severity and self-mortification and made himself the object of abuse and ridicule to save his soul. Poor man! He had a troublesome soul on his hands, and he did not know what to do with it. [9]

Charles Wesley, during his first years at Oxford, was not so greatly concerned over his salvation, which he doubtless took more or less for granted because of the excellent work of his father and mother. He gave himself up to worldly pleasures and appears to have become, like Francis Asbury, "vain, but not openly wicked." But no detailed record of his sins has been preserved. When his brother reproved him, he said: "Would you have me become a saint all at once?" But in 1727 John Wesley returned to Epworth to act as curate to his father and to study "practical divinity" with his mother, and during his absence Charles Wesley became more serious, and began to inquire into the state of his soul and its fitness for heaven. He was alarmed, and in the latter part of 1729 began to meet evenings with Robert Kirkham, of Merton College, and William Morgan, a commoner of Christ Church, to read and study the Greek Testament.

This was the formation of the Holy Club. The devotion of the three to the Scriptures, their monastic habits, and their endeavours to live according to the Gospels caused them to commit religious excesses that attracted the attention of the entire university, and they were called in derision "Bible moths," "Bible bigots," the "Holy Club," and the "Godly Club." The name of "Methodists" was first given to them by a student of Merton College, who thought to ridicule them by this allusion to the methodical plan by which they ordered their daily lives, with certain hours for prayer, certain hours for meditation, and so on. The name was not a new one; it had appeared hundreds of years before in primitive Christianity, and at the time of the Wesleys a sect of Calvinistic divines bore it. In a book published in 1657 John Spencer, librarian of Sion College, asked: "Where now are our Anabaptists and plain pikestaff Methodists, who esteem all flowers of rhetoric in sermons no better than stinking weeds?" This book might have been known to the fellow of Merton College who gave Wesley and his associates what was then regarded as an opprobious nickname.

In some parts of Ireland, notably Dublin and Cork, the Methodists became known as "swaddlers," an epithet which is still applied to them by the Irish peasantry. The name was first given to John Cennick, who preached in Swift's Alley, Dublin, in 1746, from "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." His use of the word "swaddling" excited great merriment among the hostile element of his hearers, and a Catholic priest who had come to ridicule the preacher leaped upon a chair and shouted: "Ho ho! Here is a swaddler come among us!" The name was applied generally to Methodists the following year, when they formed a society in Doblin's barn. During the riots in Cork in 1749, when many Methodists were injured and driven from the town by the Catholics, the cry of the mob was "Five pounds for a swaddler's head!"[10]

Robert Kirkham, who is said to have preceded Morgan as Charles Wesley's associate by several days, was the son of a clergyman of Stanton, in Gloucestershire. His sister Betsy was the first of John Wesley's many sweethearts. In 1731 Kirkham left Oxford and the Methodists to become curate to his uncle, and there is no record of his further activities. Morgan, the son of an Irish gentleman of Dublin, was the first of the Oxford Methodists to enter heaven. He had a naturally morbid disposition, and the excessive piety of the Holy Club, and too much brooding over religion, soon undermined his reason. He went mad and died in Dublin in 1732, after several attempts to commit suicide. In his ravings he frequently shouted: "Oh, religious madness!" and complained that his nurses and attendants hindered him in his efforts to be with God.[11]

The fourth member of the Holy Club was John Wesley, who returned to Oxford in 1729. He immediately assumed command, and became known as the "Father of the Holy Club." Thereafter he directed its work. There was an immediate increase in membership, the total reaching twenty-seven within a year or two. Religion now became the sole business of their lives, and they maintained their course even when mobs moved against them, and church authorities denounced them as "fanatics," "papists," and "supererogation men," the last being hurled at them because they insisted on keeping all of the fasts prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. Frequently this course left them so weak they could hardly stand, and the question of their sanity was much debated, but never decided.

A Methodist historian gives this account of them:

> Like the man in the gospel who was so well satisfied with himself, the members of the Holy Club fasted twice in the week; they denied themselves all luxuries and many comforts that they might have money to give to the poor; they kept the forty days of Lent so strictly as to be half-starved when the great annual fast was over; they practised all the rules for the attainment of holiness that they could find in the Book of Common Prayer, in *De Imitatione Christi,* Law's *Sermons, Taylor's Holy Living and Dying, The Whole Duty of Man,* etc.; they sought for separation from the world, and managed to live, in the midst of the teeming folly and dissipation of Oxford, a life of almost monastic severity. . . . The extent to which the success of the Holy Club depended upon the personal magnetism of John Wesley is shown by the fact that while he was absent on a visit to his old home at Epworth, some time in the year 1733, its membership dwindled from twenty-seven to only five; a reduction scarcely to be lamented, for a more perfect specimen of Pharisaism the Christian world has rarely seen; and its own members in after years confessed it to be a futile effort to save themselves, instead of coming to the Saviour set forth in the Word of God.[12]

Besides the Wesleys, the most celebrated member of the Holy Club was George Whitefield, the greatest evangelist of Methodism and in his latter years one of John Wesley's most vigorous opponents, preaching against him and constantly tilting with him on the doctrine of election. Whitefield made some thirteen preaching trips to America, and founded an Orphans' Home and School in Georgia, which was later destroyed by fire. He died at Newburyport, Mass., on September 3, 1770. His evangelical labours in this country were more successful than those of any preacher since Jonathan Edwards aroused New England. He entered Pembroke College, Oxford, at the age of eighteen, in 1732, and soon afterward joined the Holy Club, having excited the interest of Charles Wesley, who graciously invited him to breakfast. In his boyhood Whitefield was, as he expressed it, "very froward," performing all manner of wickedness, stealing from his mother's purse and taking whatever money he found about the house. However, he had some early convictions of sin, and rather naïvely records that of the money he stole he always gave a certain portion to the poor.

In pious excesses Whitefield surpassed even Morgan and the Wesleys. Soon after entering Oxford he was greatly influenced by a treatise called *The Life of God in the Soul of Man,* in which it was set forth that true religion was a union of the soul with God, or the formation of Christ within the heart and soul. He immediately felt a ray of divine light dart in upon him and, suffused with a glow of emotion, set about accomplishing this union and attaining holiness. The result was that he was soon overwhelmed by a horrible fearfulness and dread; he lost the power to meditate, or even think; his memory vanished; he felt himself on the verge of mental and spiritual suffocation, and his frantic quest for the ultimate glories of religion brought upon him contempt and insult, and there was much talk about the university that he had gone insane. He wrote:

> When I knelt down, I felt great pressure on soul and body; and have often prayed, under the weight of them, until the sweat came through me. God only knows how many nights I have lain upon my bed groaning under what I felt. Whole days and weeks have I spent in lying prostrate on the ground in silent or vocal prayer.[13]

Whitefield soon began to torture himself and practise austerities. He chose the worst of food, and kept Lent so strictly that except on Saturdays and Sundays his only sustenance was coarse bread and sage tea, without sugar. He wore the meanest of apparel, woollen gloves, a patched gown, and dirty shoes, and made himself an object of derision by refusing to powder his hair. He knelt in prayer under the trees in Christ Church Walk, shivering with cold, for hour after hour, and in the morning awoke and exposed himself to the wintry weather until his hands turned black.

In less than three months he suffered a break-down and was under the care of a physician for several weeks. But during this time he was definitely converted, and felt a call to join John and Charles Wesley and Delamotte in Georgia, whither they had gone in 1735. Charles, in order to make the voyage, had taken orders in the Church of England, a step which he approached with distaste, for he had resolved to spend his life at Oxford, as a scholar and a tutor. He went primarily as secretary to General Oglethorpe, while John and Delamotte were official missionaries to the Indians.

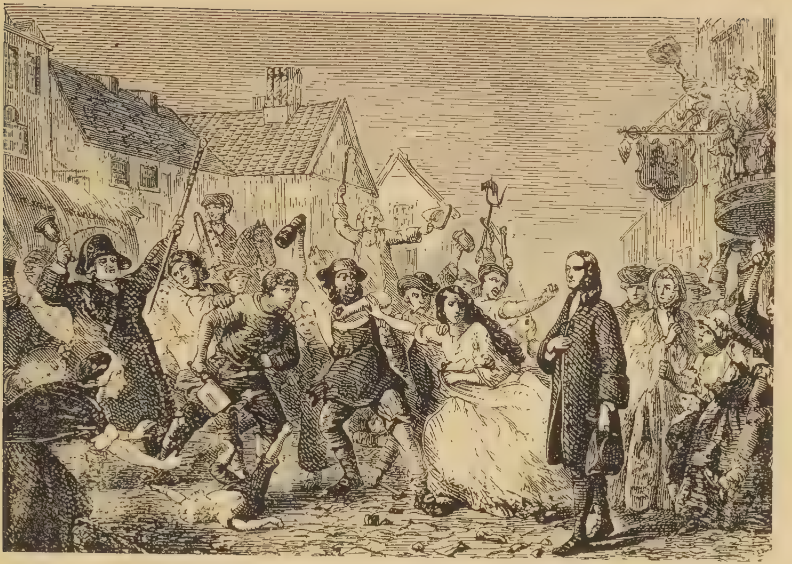
But while Whitefield was successful in America and became the pattern for future American evangelists, John and Charles Wesley were not. John had become more and more fanatical and emotionally unbalanced after joining the Holy Club and assuming control of its destiny, and this fanaticism was increased by his intercourse with a band of Moravian colonists who had taken the same ship to America. Coupled with his constitutional susceptibility to women, this soon got him into trouble. While stationed in Savannah as a rector of the Church of England and a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, he became enamoured of Miss Sophia Christiana Hopkey, a niece of the wife of Thomas Causton, chief magistrate of the colony founded by Oglethorpe. Miss Hopkey was, as a Methodist historian says, the most promising lamb in his flock, and she probably would have married him had he not suddenly become cautious and asked the advice of the Moravians. Bishop Nitschmann told him to proceed no further in the matter, and Wesley at once began avoiding Miss Hopkey, who became indignant and engaged herself to one Williamson, whom she later married. In his Journal Wesley gives this brief but illuminating description of his rival:

> March 8. Miss Sophy engaged herself to Mr. Williamson, a person not remarkable for handsomeness, neither for greatness, neither for wit, or knowledge, or sense, and least of all for religion.[14]

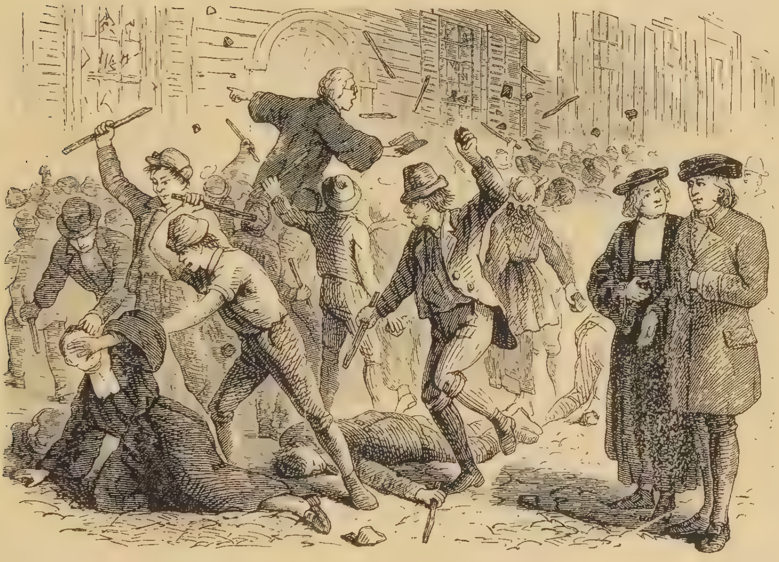
Wesley renewed his suit after the announcement of the engagement, but the jilted young woman repulsed him, and after she was married, he refused to administer to her the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and repelled her from the communion. For this a warrant was issued against him, Williamson claiming damages to the extent of a thousand pounds. Before a recorder and a bailiff Wesley insisted that the giving or withholding of the Lord's Supper was a purely ecclesiastical matter, and would not acknowledge their right to question him about it. The bailiff instructed him to appear for trial at the next term of the Savannah court, but the case was never heard, although Wesley several times insisted upon having his day in court. Methodist writers point to this latter fact and declare that the whole affair was an attempt to blacken Wesley's character and drive him out of Georgia. But meanwhile Charles Wesley had incurred the enmity of Oglethorpe and the colonists at Frederica, who reported that he had been instrumental in a scheme to induce them to abandon their land-holdings, and the brothers decided that America had lost its charm. In December, 1737, they sailed for England, passing George Whitefield on the high seas.

4

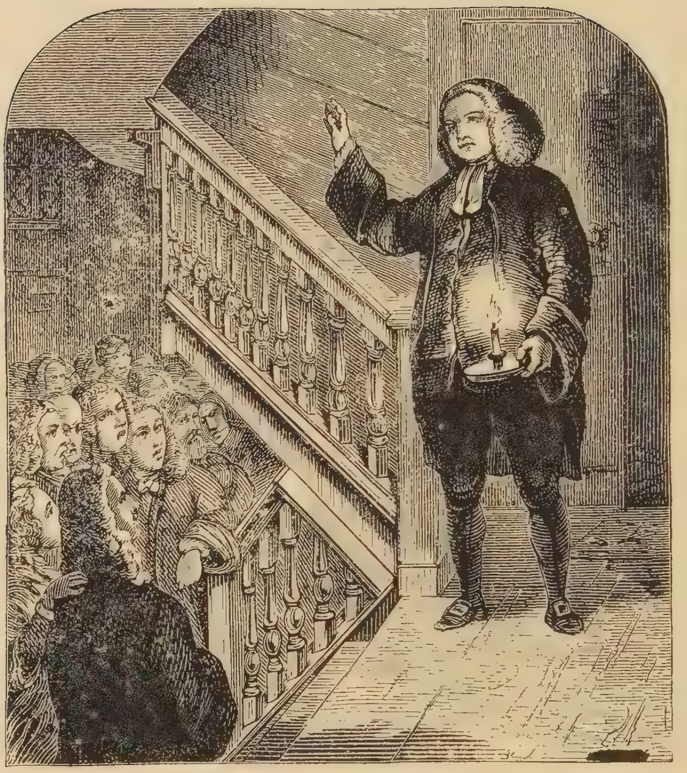
John and Charles Wesley were converted within a few days of each other, and, as was the case in most of their joint enterprises, Charles led the way. He reached the peak of Methodist holiness on May 21, 1738, under the immediate influence of the Moravian preacher Peter Bohler, and John achieved the new birth three days later, at a Moravian meeting in Aldersgate Street. It was soon after his conversion that John Wesley, with Ingham, went to Herrnhut in Germany near the borders of Bohemia and joined the Moravian colony, putting himself under the government of Count Zinzendorf and the spiritual instruction of Christian David, pastor of the Moravian flock. One of the tenets of the Moravian creed was mortification of the spirit, and to assist Wesley in accomplishing this Count Zinzendorf sent him into the fields to dig like a common labourer. Later the Count called him from his labours to visit a neighbouring nobleman, but refused to



John Wesley Mobbed at Wednesbury



"Five Pounds for a Swaddler's Head!"
Anti-Methodist Riots in Cork



Whitefield's Last Exhortation

permit the Oxford scholar to make his toilet, saying that it would help him to mortify his spiritual pride to go as he was.

Meanwhile Charles Wesley had resumed preaching, and when John returned to England after a few weeks at Herrnhut, the brothers continued their work in and about London, reclaiming many sinners. But the churches were soon closed to them, and they were driven to preaching in the fields, following the example of Whitefield, and in the Moravian meeting-houses. The effect of their constant intercourse with the Moravians is apparent in every stage of the early development of Methodism; the Wesleys differed with Count Zinzendorf and his followers in matters of creed, but copied their methods and organization. The practice of using the testimony of converted persons to arouse enthusiasm and emotion at revivals and preaching services, still common in Methodism, was Moravian, as were the class and band meetings that became such important features of the Wesleyan movement. In class the men and women met together, but in band they met separately, each group under the direction of a leader appointed by the preacher in charge of the circuit. In some districts, notably in Ireland, two floors of a house were used, with a hole cut in the ceiling so that the leader, standing on a table, could talk to the women below and then pop his head through the opening and exhort the men above. The women were never put upstairs for fear there might be holes in the ceiling.

At this period a Methodist was little more than an uncertain Moravian. The Wesleys themselves were probably more Moravian than anything else, although both retained their communicancy with the Church of England and went to the edifices and priests of the Establishment for the sacraments. They organized a Moravian society in Fetter Lane, in London, before John Wesley went to Herrnhut, and for some time after his return to England he appeared as a leader in the Moravian groups there and at Bear Yard, Gutter Lane, and in the Aldersgate Street house where he was converted. However, the extravagances of the Moravians soon got beyond all bounds; many of them embraced the antinomian philosophies which were contrary to everything that John and Charles Wesley believed and preached, and others held that it was a sin for a man to pray, read the Bible, or attend the Lord's Supper until he had been definitely and consciously converted. Their argument was that the Devil would pray with him, read the Scriptures with him, and drink Jesus's blood with him, and thus defile the Word and ordinances of God. John Wesley denounced these notions as fanatical and extravagant, and a breach was formed that never healed. On July 20, 1740, the Fetter Lane Society voted to expel him from its membership. He took eighteen others with him, and some time later was joined by fifty more who opposed the Moravian heresies. They were mostly women.

Count Zinzendorf himself came to London and pleaded with Wesley to return to the Moravians, but he refused and thereafter had no connexion with them save that of fellowship. With the Moravian rebels he proceeded to the Old Foundry in the Moorfields district of London, which he had purchased with his own funds and opened for worship on November 11, 1739, organizing a small society of some eight or ten members. This is recognized by Methodist historians as the first real Methodist society, and the date as the natal day of Methodism. Wesley now, on July 23, 1740, formed the first United Society, and Methodism was fairly started on its amazing course. The organization had seventy-three members, of whom forty-eight were women. And ever since women have been the strength of the faith.

The Wesleys immediately formulated the General Rules of the United Societies, which are still an essential governing feature of American and British Methodism. The only change of importance that has been made in them in this country has been the addition of a regulation prohibiting slave-holding. A group which John Wesley had organized at Bristol early in 1739 soon joined the new movement, and the brothers sent lay members far and wide to form other societies. These men were instructed to pray and exhort, but under no circumstances to preach, John Wesley holding that no preaching was acceptable to God unless done by an ordained clergyman. But in 1740 Thomas Maxfield, a man of the most intense piety and a leader of the Old Foundry class meetings, was unable to restrain himself; he arose to exhort and pray as usual and found himself preaching vehemently. Others quickly followed his example, and although Wesley was shocked, he finally concluded that they had been called of God, and so began the establishment of the lay ministry of Methodism.

The services of the Methodists were at first patterned closely after those of the Moravians, but emotional excesses soon began to appear. Under the preaching of John Wesley and other gifted exhorters capable of portraying the glories of Heaven and the horrors of hell, sinners fell in fits or collapsed unconscious to the floor, remaining in a cataleptic condition for hours. Others beat themselves black and blue with their fists and rocked back and forth in their seats, moaning and groaning in anguish. Some merely stood stock-still and yelled. These manifestations were soon accepted as authentic Methodist miracles and as infallible signs that God had entered the soul of the person so affected and was wrestling with the Devil; they are said to have inspired Charles Wesley to write his celebrated poem "Wrestling Jacob."

The Wesleys also revived the ancient agape or love-feast of the early Christians, and established the watch-night services with which every Protestant is familiar. They appointed three love-feasts a quarter, one for the men, another for the women, and a third for both together, "that we might eat together bread, as the ancient Christians did, with gladness and singleness of heart." The modern prayer-meeting and similar gatherings are logical outgrowths of this practice. The celebration of the watch-night grew out of the Bacchanalian revels of the colliers of Kingswood. It was the custom of these abandoned sinners to spend each Saturday night in drunken carousal, and to celebrate the New Year with orgies that sometimes continued for a week. But when John Wesley invaded the district, on the heels of Whitefield, and converted the whole population *en masse,* he turned them to religious instead of drunken revelry. Instead of meeting in the ale-houses and gin mills and drinking and singing ribald songs, they met in the Methodist chapels and sang hymns and prayed. The practice persists, although modern Methodism confines its celebration to the last night of the year. Daniel Moncure Conway calls it the Feast of St. Wesley and pronounces its origin demoniac, tracing it to the ages-old conflict between the pagan gods of heat and cold, between summer and winter.[15]

Both John and Charles Wesley, although Charles to a lesser degree than John, for his mind was less credulous, acknowledged a belief in diabolical agencies, and particularly in demoniac possession, pointing out that since they occurred in biblical times, as clearly set forth in the Word of God, there was no reason for believing that they could not occur in England during the eighteenth century. John Wesley held that God permitted Satan to employ evil spirits in inflicting death, or evils of various kinds, on the " men that know not God." He wrote:

> For this end they may raise storms by sea or land; they may shoot meteors through the air; they may occasion earthquakes; and, in numberless ways, afflict those whom they are not suffered to destroy. Where they are not permitted to take away life, they may inflict various diseases, and many of these, which we may judge to be natural, are undoubtedly diabolical. I believe this is frequently the case with lunatics. It is observable that many of these mentioned in Scripture who are called lunatics by one of the Evangelists are termed demoniacs by another. . . . May not some of these evil spirits be likewise employed in conjunction with evil angels, in tempting wicked men to sin, and in procuring occasions for them? Yea, and in tempting good men to sin, even after they escaped the corruption that is in the world. Herein, doubtless, they put forth all their strength, and greatly glory if they conquer.[16]

Wesley's writings abound with instances of demoniac possession and the means, generally prayer, or the laying on of hands, or both, employed to drive out the devil. Their belief in the existence and permitted activity of devils and demons in a universe governed by a good and omnipotent God was shared by all of the early Methodist preachers, and virtually all of them, both British and American, possessed the power to cure and relieve members of their flocks so afflicted.

In addition to their work of preaching, praying, organizing societies, and exorcizing devils, the Wesleys continued their literary activities. In 1738 they published a volume of Isaac Watts's hymns and poems, and in 1739 brought out the first book of their own composition. This was *Hymns and Sacred Poems,* largely the work of Charles Wesley. Before 1742 John Wesley had written and circulated many pamphlets and books, among them *Word to a Swearer, Word to a Smuggler,* and *Word to a Sabbath-Breaker.* The extent to which they spread their writings throughout England, and the thoroughness with which they covered the field, is indicated by this entry in John Wesley's Journals in 1745:

> And this day an *Earnest Exhortation to Serious Repentance* was given out at every church door in or near London, to every person who came out, and one left at the house of every householder who was absent from church. I doubt not that God gave a blessing therewith.

John Wesley's literary output numbers some 118 titles. His sermons comprise 141 discourses, and were published in several volumes, as were his Journals. He wrote a book on medicine, called *Primitive Physic, or an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases.* He wrote another on electricity, five on music, a *Dictionary,* a *History of Rome* in five volumes, a *History of England* in four volumes, a *History of the Church* in four volumes, text-books on French, Latin, English, Greek, and Hebrew grammar, and compendiums of logic and rhetoric. He prepared *A Christian Library* in fifty volumes, a *Compendium of Natural Philosophy* in five volumes, and published several expurgated editions of classical authors. With his brother he published forty-nine books of hymns and poetry, and in addition to all this found time to establish the *Arminian Magazine,* edit it, and do a vast amount of writing for it.

5

During the early period of the development of Methodism the preachers were called "assistants" and "helpers," the former corresponding to the modern presiding elder, and the latter to the pastor of a single church or charge. There were also the local preachers, who did not give all of their time to the work, but preached occasionally in the neighbourhood of their homes under the direction of the helper. The assistant was in command of a circuit. He kept lists of the society, admitted and expelled members, held quarterly meetings, visited the classes, celebrated watch-nights and love-feasts, superintended the work of the other preachers, and in general regulated the spiritual business of his flock. He was assisted by a certain number of helpers, according to the extent of his domain. Great care was exercised in admitting helpers to the connexion. An aspirant was examined concerning his theological knowledge, and was required to preach before Wesley and to give, either orally or in writing, his reasons for thinking that God had called him to the ministry. If his gifts were satisfactory, he was admitted on trial and was specifically cautioned to do nothing on his own initiative, and not to ramble up and down, but to go where he was sent and to obey the assistant and Wesley in all things, great and small. Later Wesley found it necessary to draw up rules for his helpers, which were rigorously enforced:

> 1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment; never be triflingly employed. Never while away time, neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
> 2. Be serious. Let your motto be "Holiness to the Lord." Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking.
> 3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women; particularly with young women in private.
> 4. Take no step toward marriage without first acquainting us with your design.
> 5. Believe evil of no one; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on everything; you know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side.

> 6. Speak evil of no one; else *your* word, especially, would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast till you come to the person concerned.
>
> 7. Tell everyone what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom.
>
> 8. Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. A preacher of the gospel is a servant of all.
>
> 9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; not of fetching wood (if time permit) or of drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes, or your neighbour's.
>
> 10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time, and, in general, do not *mend* our rules, but *keep* them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.
>
> 11. You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most.
>
> 12. Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct; partly in preaching, and visiting the flock from house to house; partly in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in the Lord's vineyard, it is needful that you should do that part of the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for his glory.[17]

The helpers, and the assistants also, were further directed not to hold services longer than one hour, and to pray not more than eight or ten minutes at a time. Both of these instructions were frequently broken, especially by Asbury and the enthusiastic American evangelists, who often preached three and four hours at a time, or as long as they could do so without exhaustion. One of the early English conferences passed a rule that no preacher should preach oftener than twice on a week-day and three times on Sunday, and that one of these sermons was to be always at five o'clock in the morning, if as many as twenty hearers could be found. Unlike some of the more vigorous of the modern Methodist evangelists, Wesley also advised moderation in preaching; he delighted in loud and vehement sermons, but discouraged screaming. To John King, a preacher noted for his hysterical discourses, he wrote:

> Scream no more, at the peril of your soul. God now warns you by me, whom He has set over you. Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. It was said of our Lord: " He shall not cry." The word properly means: " He shall not scream." Herein be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently, but I never scream. I never strain myself. I dare not; I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul.[18]

Not only did Wesley tell his preachers what, when, and where to preach and how much noise to make, but he prescribed for them the minutest rules of life, dictating their physical habits so far as nature permitted. He forbade them to use snuff, but granted them one glass of ale at night after preaching; this, however, modern Methodists have decided is a sin. He ordered them to eat a light supper, if any, and to breakfast on orange-peel tea, or on nettle; he told them to go to bed before ten o'clock every night and to rise before five in the morning. It soon became the general custom for a Methodist preacher to rise at four, pray and read the Bible until five, and then hold his first preaching service of the day.

Wesley also frowned upon the marriage of a Methodist to an unbeliever, or non-Methodist, following in that respect the example of the Catholics. In one of his most famous sermons he said:

> How great is the darkness of that execrable wretch (I can give him no better title, be he rich or poor) who will sell his own child to the Devil; who will barter her own eternal happiness for any quantity of gold or silver; What a monster would any man be accounted who devoured the flesh of his own offspring! And is he not as great a monster who, by his own act and deed, gives her to be devoured by that roaring

> lion, as he certainly does (so far as is in his power) who marries her to an ungodly man?
>
> But he is rich; he has ten thousand pounds! What if it were a hundred thousand pounds? The more the worse; the less probability will she have of escaping the damnation of hell. With what face wilt thou look upon her when she tells thee in the realms below: "Thou hast plunged me into this place of torment! Hadst thou given me to a good man, however poor, I might now have been in Abraham's bosom."
>
> Are any of you that are called Methodists seeking to marry your children well (as the cant phrase is); that is, to sell them to some purchaser that has much money, but little or no religion? Have you profited no more by all ye have heard? Man, woman, think what you are about! Dare you also sell your child to the Devil? You undoubtedly do this (as far as in you lies) when you marry a son or a daughter to a child of the Devil, although it be one that wallows in gold or silver. Oh, take warning in time! Beware of the gilded bait! Death and hell are hid beneath. Prefer grace before gold and precious stones; glory in heaven to riches on earth! If you do not, you are worse than the very Canaanites. They only made their children pass through the fire to Moloch! you make yours pass into the fire that shall never be quenched, and to stay in it for ever! [19]

The rule against marrying an infidel or an unconverted man was rigorously enforced by the Methodists in England, and by the church in America until comparatively recent years. In 1792 the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, later head of the Book Concern and a noted itinerant, recorded in his Journal: "To-day I turned Sister S.B., that was, out of the society for marrying an unawakened man. It went right hard with some of her friends, but I must enforce the rules." Many similar instances may be found in Methodist history.

Wesley also prescribed the clothing of a Methodist, directing that it be of plain stuff, without ornaments or ruffles. One of the band rules was that no rings, ear-rings, necklaces, or ruffles be worn, and tickets were given to no person who had not left them off. Wesley maintained that curling the hair, and the wearing of gold, precious stones, and expensive clothing were expressly forbidden by the Bible, an attitude which is reflected in the tirades of present-day Methodist parsons against bobbed hair and short skirts. Wesley embodies his ideas on dress in this general order to the Methodists:

> I exhort all those who desire me to watch over their souls to wear no gold, no pearls, or precious stones; use no curling of the hair or costly apparel, how grave soever. I advise those who are able to receive this saying, buy no velvet, no silks, no fine linen, no superfluities, no mere ornaments, though ever so much in fashion. Wear nothing, though you have it already, which is of a glaring colour, or which is in any kind gay, glistering, or showy; nothing made in the very height of the fashion; nothing apt to attract the eyes of the bystanders. I do not advise women to wear ear-rings, rings, necklaces, laces (of whatever kind or colour), or ruffles, which, little by little, may shoot easily from one to twelve inches deep. Neither do I advise men to wear coloured waistcoats, shining stockings, glittering or costly buckles or buttons, either on their coats or in their sleeves, any more than gay, fashionable, or expensive perukes. It is true that these are little, very little things, which are not worth defending; therefore give them up, let them drop; throw them away, without another word.[20]

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[1] Southey: *Life of Wesley;* Vol. I, p. 60.
[2] Daniels: *Illustrated History of Methodism,* p. 73.
[3] *See Appendix.*
[4] Ibid.
[5] Southey: *Life of Wesley;* Vol. I, p. 63.
[6] Ibid., p. 165.
[7] Daniels: *Illustrated History of Methodism,* p. 55.
[8] Ibid., p. 53.
[9] Ibid., p. 104.
[10] Crook: *Ireland and the Centenary of American Methodism,* p. 41.
[11] Tyerman: *The Oxford Methodists,* p. 12.
[12] Daniels: *Illustrated History of Methodism,* pp. 88–90.
[13] Gillies: *Memoirs of the Rev. George Whitefield,* ètc., p. 17.

[14] Daniels: *Illustrated History of Methodism*, p. 117.
[15] Conway: *Demonology and Devil Lore*; Vol. I., p. 90.
[16] Southey: *Life of Wesley*; Vol. II, p. 421.
[17] Ibid., p. 89.
[18] Ibid., p. 94.
[19] Daniels: *Illustrated History of Methodism*, p. 340.
[20] Southey: *Life of Wesley*; Vol. II, p. 289.

CHAPTER III

Crying in the Wilderness

I

METHODISM first appeared in the New World as an organized religious force in 1766, when Philip Embury and Robert Strawbridge began to preach, the former in New York City and the latter at Sam's Creek, in Frederick County, Maryland, not far from Baltimore. Francis Asbury was the eighth Wesleyan preacher to arrive in America, the fourth to come for the express purpose of preaching Methodism and the third to bear official authority from the English conference. He was preceded by Embury, Strawbridge, Thomas Webb, Robert Williams, Richard Boardman, Joseph Pilmoor, and John King. Embury, Strawbridge, and King had been local preachers and exhorters in Ireland and England, but had emigrated to America to better their secular conditions, with no particular thought of preaching. Webb was a Captain in the British Army, and although he had preached in England, had come to this country primarily on his military duties. For several years he was barrack master at Albany. Williams was the first man to sail from England with the avowed intention of spreading Wesleyan doctrine and saving the Americans according to the Methodist formula, but he had no legal designation from the English organization. Boardman and Pilmoor were the first official missionaries to America.

The Church of England was the established faith in the colonies, and was supported by taxation, although its membership comprised less than one-fifteenth of a total population of about two and a half millions. New England was still suffering from the blighting influence of the Puritans, and the churches were chiefly Congregational, but with many Baptist and Quaker organizations. The Baptists were strong in the South, and in the middle colonies the Presbyterians controlled the principal agencies of heaven. The Roman Catholics were numerous only in Maryland, and scattered about the country were a few Jews, but adherents of these faiths were for the most part compelled to practise their rites in secret. The clergymen of the Church of England were a worldly and dissolute lot, interested in horse-racing, card-playing, balls, and other social amenities rather than in interpreting the messages and commands of the Almighty. Even the Baptists, the Presbyterians, and other evangelical sects were apathetic, only an occasional preacher lashing himself into evangelistic fury and becoming militantly concerned with the salvation of his flock.

The country was sparsely settled, the bulk of the population being massed along the Atlantic seaboard, with few settlements more than a hundred miles from the sea. Philadelphia, New York, and Boston were the principal cities. Baltimore was not fifty years old when Asbury came to America, and had fewer than two thousand inhabitants. None of the great western cities had been founded except St. Louis, which was rising into prominence as a fur-trading centre. In the territory now comprising the states of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, there were barely three thousand people, and in 1768, two years after Embury and Strawbridge had begun to preach Methodism, a hunter could not find a single white man's cabin in the whole of Kentucky. Life was chiefly rural and hard, with no luxuries and few comforts, and even in the cities there was much poverty and distress. Throughout the colonies, before the coming of the Methodists, there was a wide-spread antipathy toward religion that bade fair to develop into open atheism, and much complaint against taxation for the support of the Church. The Rev. Devereaux Jarratt, when he became rector of Bath parish in Virginia in 1763, wrote that "ignorance and profaneness prevailed among all ranks and degrees, so that I doubt if even the form of godliness is to be found in one family of this large and populous parish." Ten years later he wrote to John

Wesley that he knew of but one clergyman of the Church of England who had the "power and spirit of vital religion." [1] In Virginia in 1774 Madison wrote that "poverty and luxury prevail among all sects; pride, ignorance, and knavery among the priesthood and vice and wickedness among the laity." After a tour of the middle and eastern colonies Richard Boardman reported that he found the people, for the most part, "wicked and ignorant to a lamentable degree, destitute of the fear and regardless of the worship of God." [2]

When the Wesleyan missionaries arrived, New York had about twenty thousand inhabitants, and was second in importance to Philadelphia; it did not reach the hundred-thousand mark until 1815. In 1769 Thomas Bell, a mechanic who helped erect the first Methodist chapel in America, wrote to John Wesley that New York had three places of worship of the Church of England, two of the Church of Scotland, three of the Dutch Church, one Baptist meeting-house, one Moravian, one Quaker, one Jews' synagogue, and one French Reformed chapel. There must also have been a Lutheran church, as Philip Embury joined that congregation when he reached America. In an advertisement of a school which he proposed to teach Embury announced that it would be opened in Little Queen, now Cedar, Street, "next door to the Lutheran minister's." The Presbyterians were also in the city, the Brick Presbyterian church having been fitted for worship in January, 1768. Bell probably included them in his Church of Scotland classification. The Baptists first appeared in New York about 1745, worshipping in a rigging-loft in Horse and Cart Lane, the present William Street. This was probably the same building which was later used by the Methodists.

There were three distinct phases of existence in the colonies — that of the cities, of the farms and hamlets, and of the frontier. Among them were great and clearly defined differences in comforts and conveniences. In such good-sized communities as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston life was pleasant enough, and there was an abundance of opportunity for salvation, of which few people appear to have availed themselves. But there was little or no intellectual life. A few of the leading families imported books and periodicals from France and England, but in the majority of the homes there was no literature whatever save of a religious kind, and the booksellers offered only Bibles, prayer books, and spelling-books.[3] The wealthy classes were very fashionable, especially in New York, aping the social life of the French and English and devoting themselves to London and Paris novelties. The tone of society was strongly aristocratic, and the distinctions of dress were carefully observed. The ladies and gentlemen of fashion wore silks and velvets, and powder and wigs, and the latter carried swords. The wealthy tradesmen wore broadcloth coats, with spreading skirts and wide cuffs; the shopkeepers clad themselves in simple homespun, and workmen never appeared in public without their leather aprons.

But there was little that was pleasant about life on the outlying farms and in the frontier settlements. It was hard and stern. The people lived for the most part in rude, uncomfortable cabins, with no luxuries whatever and few comforts, and besides the hardships of existence there was great danger from the Indians. And there was not sufficient social intercourse; in many sections there was none at all. Sometimes two months passed before a settler could see or talk to anyone but members of his immediate family, and there was nothing to do but work, eat, and sleep. The coming of a visitor was an occurrence of the utmost importance, and the arrival of a preacher, with his fiery language, his terrible prophecies, and his other rousers of emotion, was an epochal event that attracted crowds from a radius of fifty miles from his preaching place. With no other source of amusement the countryside attended the services *en masse*, and worked off their stored fear and loneliness in one gigantic emotional spree.

Such conditions as these were ideal for the promulgation of Wesleyan doctrine. When Francis Asbury came to America the people generally were not only weary of wresting a living from the wilderness, but had become alarmed and frightened by the clamours and excitements of the impending Revolution, and had reached that pitch of emotional insanity and instability which has always been essential to the success of Methodism. The salvation offered by other sects was largely Calvinistic, and did not provide a satisfactory solution to the emotional and spiritual troubles which beset the colonists. Each individual was prone to become obsessed by the depressing thought that he, after all, may not have been one of the elect for whom the Lord Jesus bargained with God, and so was doomed to everlasting torment despite the noise and fervour of his devotions.

Consequently the people were ready to respond gratefully to the Wesleyan doctrine of free and universal grace and sanctification; their longings for comfort and luxury, and their hope of eventual relief from the daily round of dreary drudgery, were satisfied by the Methodist promise of a circus heaven constructed of gold and precious stones, with a plenitude of virgin angels and no work. And their thirst for revenge upon their enemies was gratified by the moving-picture hell so vividly described by the Methodist itinerants and evangelists, to which the Wesleyan preacher could, at will, consign the sinful, with the certain knowledge that his decision would be ratified by the Almighty.

These were important contributing factors to the unparalleled feat of the Methodist organization in America of procuring a gain in membership of more than fifteen thousand during the period of the Revolution, despite John Wesley's tirades against the Americans and the fact that the Church in this country was largely staffed by Englishmen, all of whom, with the exception of Asbury, returned to England when the war began in earnest in 1774. But the principal reason for the amazing early success of Methodism in this country, apart from the organizing and administrative genius of Francis Asbury, was the fact that it was essentially a poor man's religion, peculiarly designed to appeal to those who have nothing and, naturally enough, want everything, either now or hereafter. As Hume has pointed out, a belief in God and a consequent adherence to religious faith are not the result of speculation, curiosity, or the pure love of truth, but rest on the anxious concern for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst for revenge, and the appetite for food and other necessaries. To these causes might well be added envy of the rich man, and the terror which afflicts the poor and unlearned man whenever he endeavours to contemplate the marvels of nature. The heaven described by the Methodists was in every respect a pauper's paradise, and the people most anxious for admittance were for the most part miserable and poverty-stricken, weary of unremitting toil; there has never been any particular advantage in a rich man's going to a heaven that appears to be little more than a celestial replica of his town house or his country estate. He owns already most of the material things with which heaven abounds, although of course not so many of them, nor of such Babylonian magnificence, as the poor man hopes to obtain when the spiritual loot is apportioned and he receives his just reward.

No one realized more fully than Francis Asbury that Methodism had an especial appeal to the masses. He himself formed his friendships among the aristocrats, numbering among his intimates governors, judges, and rich planters of the South, but his preachings and offerings of salvation according to the Methodist plan were chiefly to the poor. Under his direction the Methodist itinerants and evangelists spread the doctrine that the Lord had an especially soft spot in his heart for the poor people, and that in return for their devotion He would make them rich and happy and comfortable in the sweet by and by, thus giving them something to look forward to. The preachers promised everything — wings, harps, fleecy clouds on which to sail grandly through space, a continually balmy atmosphere, mansions of gold and rubies and diamonds, and, best of all, no physical labour. The Methodist psalmody is filled with hymns depicting the sensuous, barbaric joys of life in the mansions of the skies. And the evangelists preached also the Christian theory of a God omnipotent and utterly good, not at all abashed by the paradoxical spectacle of this selfsame God permitting the vast majority of His children to be for the whole of their earthly lives miserable and unhappy and constantly on the verge of actual want. This, they explained, was God's will, not to be questioned.

Asbury laboured diligently to retain simplicity in Methodism and to keep its appeal to the poor intact; in later years, as other bishops have done since, he became alarmed at the tendency of the laity toward the fashions of the day, and the further tendency of both clergy and laymen to ape the Episcopalians. He preached constantly, and practised, despite his aristocratic associations, the Wesleyan rule of simplicity in dress and deportment; he insisted that the Methodist meeting-houses should be built without architectural doodads, and maintained a consistent enmity toward steeples, bells, and organs. After he had become bishop, he found a Methodist church in Augusta, Ga., with a cracked bell over the gallery, and exclaimed indignantly that he hoped it would break. "It is the first I ever saw in a house of ours in America," he wrote. "I hope it will be the last." In 1813, in New Hampshire, he wrote: "Oh, rare steeple houses, bells (organs by and by); these things are against me and contrary to the simplicity of Christ. We have made a stand in the New England conference against steeples and pews; and shall possibly give up the houses unless the pews are taken out." [4] At the organization conference in 1784 Asbury committed the new-born Methodist Episcopal Church to opposition to rich men and elaborate meeting-houses by procuring the insertion of this paragraph in the Discipline:

> Let all our chapels be built plain and decent, but not more expensive than is absolutely unavoidable; otherwise the necessity of raising money will make rich men necessary to us. But if so, we must be dependent upon them, yea, and governed by them. And then farewell to the Methodist Discipline, if not doctrine too.[5]

This provision remained in the Discipline until 1872, when it was revised and the portion about rich men omitted. It now reads: "Let all our chapels be built plain and decent, and with free seats wherever practicable, and not more expensive than is absolutely unavoidable." [6] The gates of the Methodist paradise, therefore, are now open to the wealthy, and they are not only welcomed in the Church but eagerly sought for; if a preacher bags a rich convert there is great rejoicing; and the recruit is immediately called upon for a donation. The northern branch of the Church has made other overtures to the rich and fashionable by removing the ban against dancing and the theatre, and by introducing, in many of their churches, a ritualism that appears to be entirely contrary to the scheme of the Wesleys. However, this last would probably have delighted Francis Asbury, for he was at heart a ritualist, and combined a love of pomp and ceremony with a passion for asceticism and salvation of the poor. He wore the gown, cassock, and bands of a Church of England bishop for several years, until rising opinion among the plain people and preachers compelled him to abandon them, and was at all times insistent upon a strict interpretation of the rules and discipline, and a set form of service. The ritual which he most favoured was this: first a lively song, then a fervent prayer, a noisy sermon, and an earnest hymn. After singing the hymn the congregation faced sharply to the right, repeated the last two lines, and then knelt in prayer. Asbury always desired that these movements be executed with military precision and frequently drilled his congregations before he would permit them to depart.

2

Philip Embury, the pioneer American Methodist, was a descendant of a German Protestant, one of the six thousand who fled to England in the seventeenth century after the devastation of the Palatinate by the troops of King Louis XIV, followed by Catholic persecution of the inhabitants. The English government encamped the refugees on Blackheath and Camberwell Commons, and in 1710 sent some three thousand of them to North Carolina, New York, and Pennsylvania. At the same time fifty or a hundred families went to Ireland and settled on the estates of Lord Southwell, near Rathkeale, Court Matric, and Balligarrene in County Limerick. Among them were the Emburys, the Hecks, Ruckles, Lawrences, Switzers, and others whose names were to become prominent in American Methodism.

Embury was born in Balligarrene in 1728. He attended German and English schools, and served an apprenticeship with a carpenter, following that trade and teaching school when he came to America. He was converted at the age of twenty-four, and immediately joined a Wesleyan society, becoming a local preacher and carrying on the work of the Methodist God with great vigour. He married Margaret Switzer in 1758, and that same year was placed on the reserve list of the travelling connexion of the Wesleyan Conference. He emigrated to America in 1760, with a company from his own district, including Paul Heck and his wife, Barbara, and John Lawrence, who married Mrs. Embury some ten years later, after Embury's death in Ashgrove, N. Y. The New York *Mercury* for August 18, 1760, notes the arrival of the immigrants on August 10, on the ship *Perry*, Captain Hogan. Five years later another group arrived, including Mrs. Heck's brother, Peter Ruckle, and Richard Sause.

Embury and his wife found a house in Barrack Street, which ran from Centre Street to Park Row. Barbara Heck and her husband, cousins to Embury, settled across the street. This thoroughfare was later called Tyron Row, and is now occupied by the southern end of the Municipal Building. In Embury's day it was the wickedest street in the city, occupied almost exclusively by rum shops and the barracks of the Sixteenth Regiment of the British Army, then forming the garrison. A contemporary writer says there were eleven saloons within two blocks of the barracks, and it has been said that one was on either side of Embury's cottage. It was from this sink of iniquity that Methodism rose to become the most potent evangelical force in the New World, but not immediately. Embury had considerable difficulty making a living, and had no time to think of preaching, although he had continued his custom of family worship and had become a devout communicant of the Lutheran Church. He did not fall into the ways of gross sin and become a card-player, as some anti-Methodist writers have maintained, to the vast indignation of the Church.

But it was because of a card-game that he began to preach in the autumn of 1766. Mrs. Heck was a typical Methodist " mother in Israel," and was constantly worrying about the souls of the people, and the aptitude for pleasure which they appeared to possess. She frequently implored Embury to exercise his hortatory gifts, but he was deaf to her entreaties; he assumed that his own soul was safe in the custody of the Lutheran minister, and remained unaffected even when Mrs. Heck offered gloomy predictions of his spiritual future. But at length she could stand it no longer. Returning to her home one afternoon from an errand, she heard loud laughter as she approached the door. Indignant at this evidence that Satan had at last succeeded in penetrating her house, she burst into the kitchen, and there found a company of men, including her brother and John Lawrence, seated around a table. They were playing cards! For a moment Mrs. Heck was so overcome with emotion that she could only stand and stare at them. But presently she recovered. She denounced them in shrill, vigorous language for thus imperilling their immortal souls by laughing and manipulating the Devil's pasteboards. They ignored her, and she swept hotly across the room, raked the cards from the table into her apron, and cast them into the fire-place. She then sang a hymn, and afterward dropped to her knees and implored the Lord to withhold, temporarily at least, His avenging fury. Then she got on her bonnet and hastened across the street to Embury's house.

"Philip!" she cried. "You must preach to us, or we shall all go to hell, and God will require our blood at your hands!"[7]

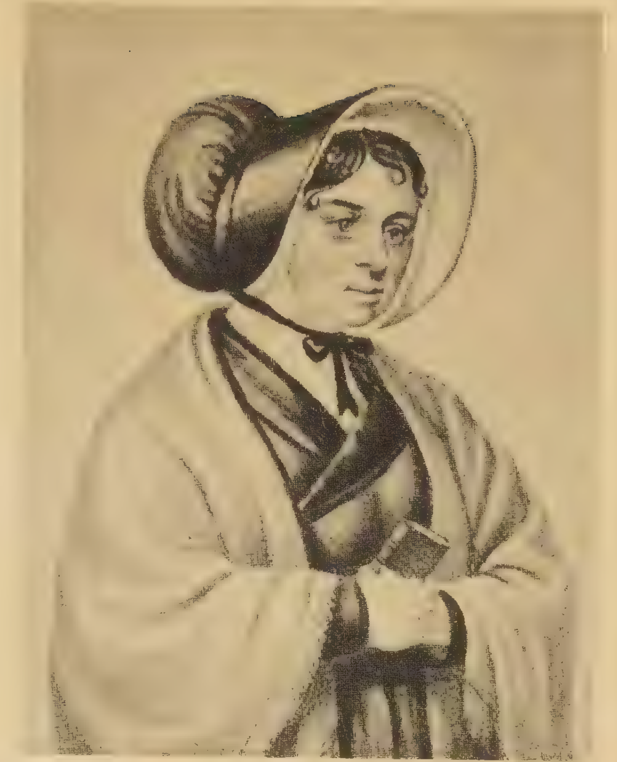
Embury demurred. He was very busy, and he had no place to preach, and no assurance that the authorities would not put him in the stocks if he dared offer a new method of salvation.

"Preach in your own house!" commanded Mrs. Heck. "And at once. The Lord will protect you!"

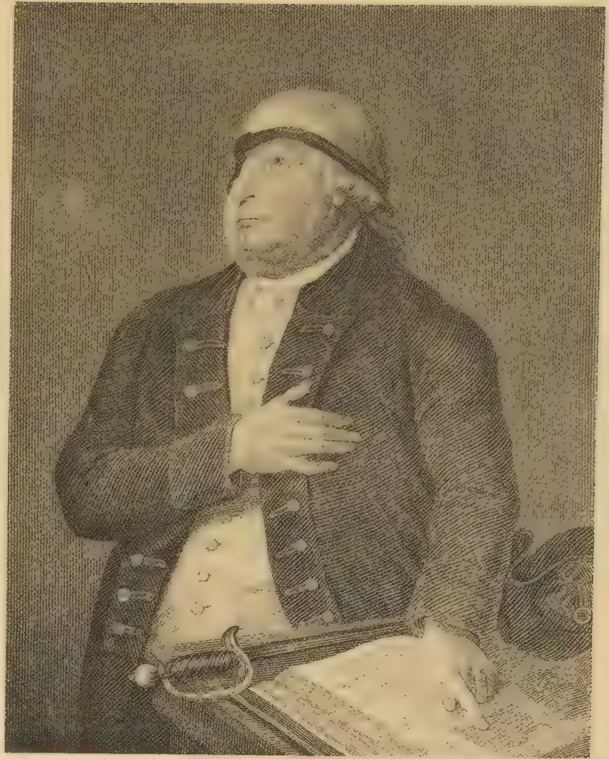
Embury had known Mrs. Heck for many years. So that night the first Methodist sermon was heard in America. Embury preached in the single room of his cottage, and there were present Mrs. Embury, Paul and Barbara Heck, John Lawrence and Betty, a Negress employed by the Hecks. Peter Ruckle, who is said to have promoted the card-game and who had apparently experienced a considerable falling from grace since his arrival in America, did not attend the services, but later became a spiritual trophy of the Methodists and laboured valiantly for the faith. Thereafter Embury preached several times a week, and to the great disappointment of himself and the other Methodists he was not molested or persecuted. He converted, among others, three musicians from the regiment, James Hodge, Addison Low, and John Buckley. They became adept exhorters, being of full voice, and assisted Embury in preaching. They were especially helpful in the singing of the hymns because of their knowledge of music. With Embury they went to the poor-house and preached to and exhorted the inmates, their converts including the master, Billy Littlewood. In a short time the congregations of the Methodists became too large for Embury's house, and a room was hired in a building adjoining the barracks. Embury then formed a society, with class and band organization, and its members began to conduct their lives according to the edicts of John Wesley.

And now appeared a new hero in American Methodism, one of its most spectacular figures, Captain Thomas Webb of the British Army, a veteran of the Battles of Louisburg and Quebec. He was converted at a meeting in England, under the powerful preaching of Wesley himself, and in 1765 joined the Wesleyan movement as a local preacher. Dr. Stevens gives this account of his appearance among the New York Methodists:

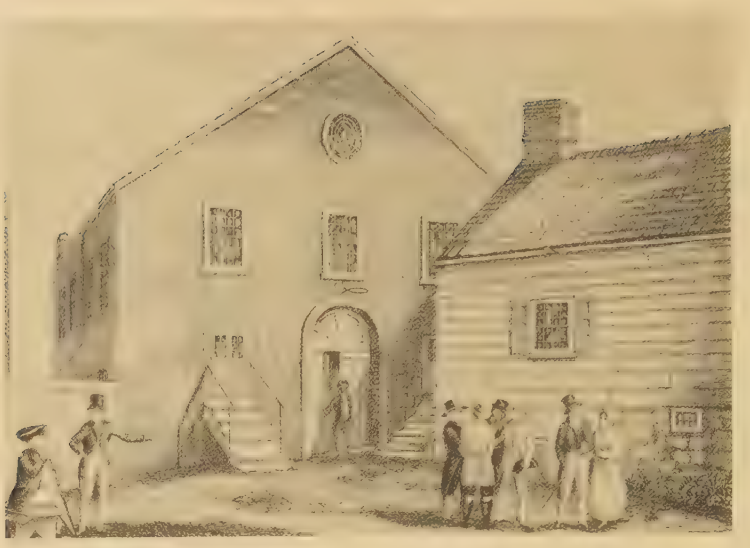
> About February 1767 the little assembly in New York was surprised, if not alarmed, by the appearance among them of a stranger in military costume, girt with his sword. He was an officer of the Royal Army. All eyes were upon him; had he come to persecute them, to interrupt their religious services, or prohibit them from worshipping? He soon relieved their apprehensions by his devout participation in their devotions. When they sung, he rose with them; when they prayed, he knelt. At the conclusion of the service he introduced himself to the preacher and his leading brethren as Captain Thomas Webb, of the King's service, but also a soldier of the cross and a spiritual son of John Wesley. They



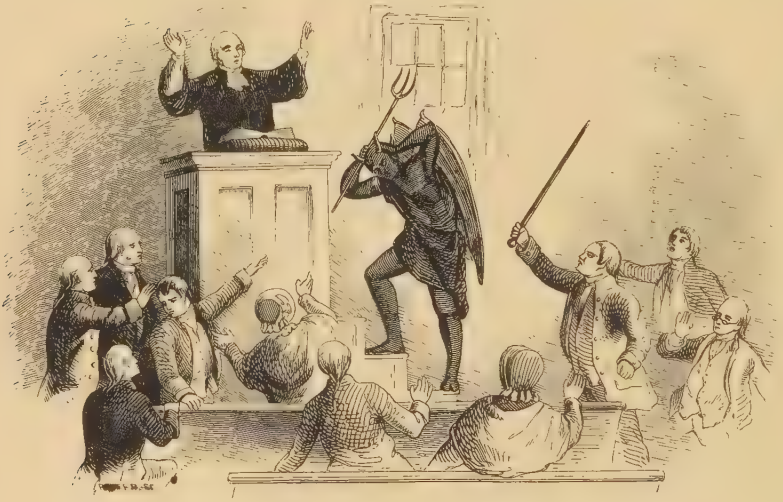
Barbara Heck



Capt. Thomas Webb



Wesley Chapel in John Street, New York — the First Methodist Church in America



A Methodist Preacher Drives the Devil from the John Street Church

> were overjoyed, and hailed him as a brother beloved. He had been authorized by Wesley to preach, and they offered him their humble desk.[8]

Captain Webb presented a striking appearance in the pulpit, and his powerful preaching made the stoutest-hearted sinners tremble and beg for mercy. His figure was short and portly, even squat, and he habitually preached in his regimentals, with his sword lying on the desk beside his Bible. His right arm, shattered by a ball at Quebec, was across his chest in a Napoleonic pose, and over his right eye hung a green shade, the eyeball having been destroyed at Louisburg. The novelty of hearing a fat, one-eyed army officer in a red suit attracted such large congregations that the hired room soon had to be abandoned for a rigging-loft in Cart and Horse Lane, the present William Street, in what is now the financial district of New York City. The loft was eighteen by sixty feet, and was rented by Embury and Webb soon after the captain began to preach.

But soon this structure could not hold half the people who wished to hear and see Captain Webb and Embury, and the Methodists began to consider the erection of a building of their own. Barbara Heck was particularly alive to the need of a meeting-house, and she made the matter a subject of much prayer and communion with the Lord. She prayed for two days and nights almost without cessation, and at the end of the second day saw the Lord in a vision and heard Him say: " I, the Lord, will do it." [9] She conveyed this information to the assembled Methodists, and there was a service of thanksgiving, but when two days had elapsed and no miracle of building had been performed, and no property deed presented to them, Embury and Captain Webb prepared a subscription paper. It bore this preamble:

> A number of persons, desiring to worship God in spirit and truth, commonly called Methodists (under the direction of the Rev. John Wesley), whom it is evident God has been pleased to bless in their meetings in New York, thinking it would be more to the glory of God and the good of souls had

> they a more convenient place to meet in, where the gospels of Jesus Christ might be preached, without distinction of sects or parties, and as Mr. Philip Embury is a member and helper in the Gospel, they humbly beg the assistance of Christian friends in order to enable them to build a small house for that purpose, not doubting but the God of all consolation will abundantly bless all such as are willing to contribute to the same.[10]

Captain Webb headed the list with a subscription of thirty pounds, and later lent the society two hundred pounds, remitting most of the interest. William Lupton, a wealthy merchant and an early pillar of Methodism, gave thirty pounds also, and the other Methodists contributed according to their means. The paper bore 250 names, from the Mayor to several slaves who had been converted by Webb and Embury, and included many of the most prominent families in New York. Among them were the Livingstons, the Duanes, Delanceys, Laights, Stuyvesants, and Lispenards. The Rev. Dr. Samuel Auchmuty, rector of Trinity Church, made a donation, as did his curate, the Rev. John Ogelsvie. Oliver Delancey subscribed six pounds and ten shillings, and Philip Livingston, a signer of the Declaration of Independence a few years later, gave a similar amount. Thirty-five women subscribed. A considerable sum was also obtained by Captain Webb in Philadelphia.

With about $400 in hand, the Methodists negotiated for the purchase of two lots in John Street, then called also Golden Hill. The property was owned by the estate of the Rev. Henry Barclay, and on one of the lots was a small building which was later used as a Methodist parsonage. On March 29, 1768, the deed was transferred from Mary Barclay, executrix, and Andrew Barclay, Leonard Lispenard, and David Clarkson, executors of the Barclay estate, to eight members of the Wesleyan Society — Embury, Lupton, Webb, Charles White, Richard Sause, Paul Heck, Henry Newton, and Thomas Taylor. They held the property as individuals, but two years later, when Boardman and Pilmoor arrived, a new conveyance was made, placing it in fee simple possession of the Methodist society, the scheme which Wesley followed with his English meeting-houses.

There was some dispute regarding the plan of the new building, but it was decided by Mrs. Heck. She resorted once more to prayer, and after an all-night session reported to her fellow Methodists that the Lord had again appeared to her in a vision and had instructed her in considerable detail how to build, providing the dimensions and the interior arrangements, and making very sensible suggestions about windows and doors. The ideas of the Lord were adopted without dissent, and the work of construction began immediately, Embury himself doing most of the timber work, and with his own hands building the pulpit. The structure was on stone, sixty by forty feet, with a fireplace and chimney to comply with the colonial law which forbade dissenting sects to erect " regular churches." This was suggested by the Lord. The house had no floor, no stairs, and no breastworks to the galleries, and the seats were wooden benches without cushions or backs. It was called Wesley Chapel. It was torn down in May 1817, and a new building erected the same year. This in turn was demolished in 1848 to make room for the present structure.

Embury continued to preach in the new chapel with great success, but Captain Webb roamed abroad in Long Island, New Jersey, Delaware, and Philadelphia, implanting Methodism and organizing societies. He hired a room and preached in Jamaica, on Long Island, where his wife's people lived, and twenty-four persons were converted under the power of his preaching and the singularity of his appearance. He preached in Newcastle and Wilmington, in Delaware, and on the shores of the Brandywine. He went back and forth across New Jersey, expounding the doctrine of the Methodists in Trenton, Pemberton, Burlington, and other towns, and forming societies. One of his New Jersey trophies was Joseph Toy, who became a leader in eastern Methodism.

In the latter part of 1767 Captain Webb journeyed to Philadelphia, preached the first Wesleyan sermon ever heard there, and organized a society of seven members, who met in a sail loft. The membership increased rapidly, and the Methodists soon moved to a large pot-house in Loxley's Court, a passage running from Arch Street to Cherry Street, near Fourth. This structure was in use when Pilmoor began to preach in Philadelphia, and Captain Webb had under his spiritual wing a flourishing society of more than a hundred members. With the addition of Pilmoor to the hortatory forces the congregations soon became so large that the Methodists decided to erect or buy a church building. In 1770 St. George's Church, built by the German Reformed Society, was sold at auction, and was purchased by a gentleman's son, not very bright, who had wandered into the salesroom and become fascinated by the mention of large sums of money. He bid seven hundred pounds, and the auctioneer immediately knocked the property down to him before he could possibly change his mind. The boy's father was anxious to rid himself of the bargain, but could not repudiate the sale without acknowledging the lad's mental deficiencies, which he was loath to do. He cast about for someone to take the church off his hands, and let it be known that he would willingly lose fifty pounds in the transaction so long as he could save the family honour. The Methodists thereupon purchased the building through the agency of Miles Pennington, one of the original members of the Wesleyan society. For a long time the house was unfurnished and unfinished, but in the course of time it was plastered and floored with coarse boards, and a new pulpit erected, for the Methodists disliked to preach from the rostrum which had been used by the Germans. For more than forty years it was the largest and finest structure in the Methodist establishment, and was known as the Methodist Cathedral. Francis Asbury preached there oftener than in any other church in America. During the Revolution the British Army used it for a riding-school.

While Embury and Captain Webb were thus sowing the seeds of Methodism in New York, Delaware, and Philadelphia, Robert Strawbridge was spreading the Wesleyan message in Maryland, and laying the foundation for the conquest of Baltimore and the South. Like Embury, Strawbridge was an Irishman, a native of Drummersnave, now called Drumsna, near Carrick-on-Shannon, in County Leitrim, where he became a Methodist itinerant. He married a Miss Piper in 1764 or 1765, and in 1766 emigrated to America, settling on Sam's Creek in Frederick County, Maryland. This was then a backwoods country, with but few settlements, and the colonists were in constant danger from the Indians. Only five years before Strawbridge's arrival the Indians passed Forts Cumberland and Frederick, and continued unchecked to within eighty miles of Baltimore, causing such consternation in the town that the women and children were put on vessels in the harbour for safety.

A few months after Embury began to preach in New York Strawbridge held Methodist services in his home, and some months later erected with his own hands the Log Cabin Meeting-House, a rough structure of hewed logs at the head of a small drain which ran into Sam's Creek. It had no seats, and the doors and windows were only cut out and faced. Nor was there a pulpit. Strawbridge stood on a chair to preach, or on a table, and his congregation sat on the bare earth, or on chairs and benches which they brought with them. In this building Strawbridge formed the first society in Maryland and the South, with John Evans, Andrew Poulson, Benjamin Marcarel, and John England as the first members.

Strawbridge was an enthusiastic and noisy preacher, but an improvident husband and father. He devoted most of his time to expounding the Gospel, and is said to have seldom uttered a word that did not concern God and religion. He frequently left his family without food to go on a hastily arranged preaching trip, remarking casually that the Lord would send meat.[11] However, the neighbours provided when Mrs. Strawbridge complained that she had nothing to eat. Strawbridge ventured into Baltimore and Hartford Counties, forming small societies, and itinerated also in eastern Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, preaching with a fluency and a power of invective that attracted large audiences. But he laboured principally in Frederick County, where he became the ecclesiastical lord of a vast area. Usurping the functions of a bishop and an ordained clergyman, he administered the sacraments, baptized, and licensed his converts to preach. His spiritual trophies included some of the most notable figures of early Methodism.

Strawbridge is thought by some Methodist writers to have preached in the city of Baltimore, but there is no historical authority for the belief. The honour of being the first man to deliver a Wesleyan discourse in the Maryland metropolis appears to belong to John King, who came to America in 1769, soon after the arrival of Boardman and Pilmoor. He came on secular business, the nature of which is unknown, but he was so impressed by the religious needs of the Americans that he asked Pilmoor for a license to preach, explaining that he had so laboured in England under the Wesleys. Pilmoor refused, and King immediately preached in the potter's field in Philadelphia on his own account, gathering a large audience and converting many sinners. Pilmoor then permitted him to deliver a trial sermon, and afterwards sent him south to assist Strawbridge. In 1770 King preached at the Forks of Gunpowder in Baltimore County, and formed a society at the home of James J. Baker, one of his first converts. King then went into the city. His first sermon was delivered from a blacksmith's block at Front and French Streets, and his second from a table at Baltimore and Calvert Streets. His second appearance was on militia training day, and the drunken crowds assaulted him, knocking him down and beating him. He was rescued by the English captain of the troops, and allowed to proceed. He made so favourable an impression that he was invited to preach in St. Paul's English Church, but he made so much noise and screamed so loudly, and created such a commotion, that the invitation was not renewed. Large crowds heard King in Baltimore, but no one opened a house for Methodist preaching until Asbury went there in 1772. Then Captain Patten offered his home on the Point as a meeting-place, and afterwards Methodist itinerants preached in the homes of William Moore, at Water and South Streets, and Mrs. Triplett, a pious member of the German Reformed Church, who had a three-story brick dwelling at Triplett's Alley and Baltimore Street.

3

No miracles of exceptional interest were performed by Methodist preachers until the arrival of Robert Williams about September 1769, although the fits and other Methodistic phenomena that accompanied the English preaching of Whitefield and Wesley occasionally appeared under the ministry of King, Strawbridge, Embury, and Webb. Williams was also an Irishman. He travelled the Irish circuits for several years, but came under the displeasure of Wesley, a progressive displeasure, as indicated by the appearance of his name in the Irish Minutes as " Robert Williams," " R. Williams," and " R. W." It finally disappeared altogether, and the next heard of Williams he was in London informing Wesley that he intended to sail at once for America with his friend and patron, Thomas Ashton, a wealthy and devout Methodist who later founded the colony at Ashgrove, N. Y., now within the city limits of Albany, where Embury formed his second society and where he died. Williams implored divine authority to save the benighted Americans, but Wesley declined to send him as an official missionary. At length, however, he was told that he might labour in the New World as a volunteer preacher under the supervision of Boardman and Pilmoor, who were to leave England later in the year. The vessel in which Williams sailed was bound for Baltimore, but storms obliged the captain to put in at Norfolk, noted in early Methodist history as a town of singular unholiness, with a distressing lack of response to Methodist doctrine. Asbury frequently deplored the state of evangelical religion in Norfolk, but eventually, like most southern cities, it became a stronghold of the faith.

Williams left the ship, and with his Bible in one hand and his hymn-book in the other proceeded up the main street. But it was evening, and few people were abroad, so that he attracted little or no attention, despite his pious appearance. He came at length to a vacant cottage bearing the sign: " This house to let." He ascended the steps, opened his hymn-book, and began to sing with Methodistic vigour. Many then stopped to listen, and when Williams had attracted a good audience, he knelt and asked the Methodist God to bless Norfolk and its residents, and the residents of the contiguous territory as well. He told the throng why he had come to America, and after a suitable interval asked who would give him a night's lodging. A lady came forward and offered to take him home in her carriage. She lived in the country and was the wife of a sea-captain, but her husband was away on a long voyage. A Methodist historian gives this account of what happened thereafter:

> She entertained Mr. Williams very kindly, and when the hour for retiring for rest arrived, he requested permission to have family prayer. The household assembled, and while he petitioned a throne of grace in their behalf, his hospitable entertainer was convicted and converted.
>
> He prayed also for the conversion of her husband. That same night, on the far-off ocean, the captain for whom he prayed was singularly affected. Having retired to his berth as usual, he found it impossible to sleep, and his restlessness and uneasiness so increased that he rose, walked the deck, and then again lay down. Sleep still forsook his eyelids, and the second time he arose, alarmed for the safety of his ship and unable to account for his peculiar feelings. He called to the mate and inquired if all was right. He was answered in the affirmative. It was a calm night and he feared that his vessel had run aground, but soon discovered that such apprehensions were unfounded. A third time he retired, but his uneasiness and distress continued to increase. At last he fell upon his knees and began to pray most fervently. God vouchsafed an answer and converted his soul. The circumstance was so remarkable that he noted it in his log-book, and on comparing dates when he arrived at home, he discovered that it occurred on the very night that Mr. Williams had offered his petitions for him.[12]

This appears to have been the first important miracle of American Methodism. And with this power it is not to be wondered at that Williams became one the foremost figures of the early church and an evangelist of great renown. He went from Norfolk to New York, preaching *en route,* and was installed as pastor of the new Wesley Chapel in John Street. He went also to Philadelphia and through New Jersey, and after the arrival of Boardman and Pilmoor hastened into Maryland to assist Strawbridge. From Maryland Williams itinerated into North Carolina and Virginia, and with Strawbridge and King laboured in those parts with pentecostal success. As a small child the Rev. Daniel Asbury heard both Williams and Strawbridge in Fairfax County, Virginia, and the first impressions of Methodist salvation were there implanted in his infant mind.

4

Boardman and Pilmoor were appointed to America by the Wesleyan Conference which met at Leeds on August 1, 1769, and on the twenty-first sailed from Gravesend on the ship *Mary and Elizabeth,* Captain Sparks. Both men had laboured in the Wesleyan connexion for several years, Boardman in Ireland and England, and Pilmoor in England and Wales, and their preaching had been attended by the usual phenomena. Boardman remained a Methodist until he died, but Pilmoor remained in the connexion only nine years after he and Boardman returned to England in 1775. Incensed because John Wesley left his name off the Deed of Declaration which in 1784 gave a legal status to his English conferences, Pilmoor returned to America to take orders in the Protestant Episcopal church. He changed his name to Pilmore and became rector of St. Paul's in Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania honouring him with the degree of Doctor of Divinity. In 1802 several members of Trinity Church in New York petitioned the parish authorities to employ him as assistant minister, and when the request was refused, seceded and formed a new church in Ann Street, with Pilmore as rector. He afterwards returned to Philadelphia, where he frequently offered his pulpit to Asbury, Coke, and other Methodists, and himself tinctured his Episcopalian sermons with Methodism. He made an annual subscription to the Preachers' Fund of the Methodist Conference, and never lost his original affection for his itinerant comrades. Another of his claims to fame is the authorship of that immortal ditty:

Mother, may I go out to swim?
Yes, my darling daughter;
Hang your clothes on a hickory limb,
But don't go near the water.[13]

The Wesleyan missionaries who were to pave the way for the coming of Francis Asbury came ashore in America at Gloucester Point about October 21, 1769, and after resting a little while in a public house, but without imbibing refreshments, walked the six miles to Philadelphia. Captain Webb had come from New York, but missed them, and they wandered the streets of the city for several hours, seeking Methodists. At length they were recognized by a man who had heard Boardman preach in England. He took them to his home, where they were greeted by Captain Webb and the Philadelphia Methodists. That evening they attended services at St. Paul's Church, and the next day Boardman opened their American ministry with a sermon on the call of Abraham to go forth into the land of Canaan.

Boardman left for New York the next day, preaching in New Jersey as he journeyed across the state, while Pilmoor remained in Philadelphia. Both he and Captain Webb preached to large congregations, more than four thousand persons hearing one of Pilmoor's sermons from the stage erected for the horse-racing. Five days after he landed Pilmoor gave an interview to Edward Evans, one of George Whitefield's first converts, who had been a Methodist for thirty years and a local preacher since Webb first came to Philadelphia. Evans had also itinerated in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and was thus the first native Methodist preacher and the first native itinerant. He died before an American conference was held, and so was never given an official charge, and his name does not appear in the official minutes. For this reason many Methodist writers have held that the first native preacher was Richard Owen and the first itinerant William Watters, but recent researches indicate that Evans preceded both.[14] Owen and Watters were natives of Maryland who were converted under the preaching of Strawbridge.

Strawbridge joined Pilmoor in Philadelphia in January 1770, and on the fourteenth preached in St. George's. At this time also Pilmoor began to make excursions out of the city, on one or more occasions going as far south as Baltimore and penetrating a considerable distance into New Jersey. He returned to Philadelphia on March 23, 1770, to hold the first love-feast on American soil. He described it as a time of " love and power," and noted that the people behaved with as much propriety as if they had been for many years acquainted with the economy of the Methodists. This work of Pilmoor's, with the aid given him by Strawbridge, Williams, Webb, King, and Evans, and later by Boardman, made Philadelphia the principal Methodist city in the land, a distinction which it has never relinquished.

Meanwhile Boardman was labouring valiantly in New York. As Wesley's assistant he was the chief Methodist preacher on the continent, and he immediately set about effecting a better organization of the New York society. He entered into a compact with Embury and Lupton, the latter steward and trustee of Wesley Chapel, whereby he received three guineas for wearing-apparel after three months' service, this arrangement to apply also to succeeding Methodist preachers. He also arranged for preaching on Sunday morning, and on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings, and for meetings of the classes and bands on Wednesday evenings. Pilmoor joined him in New York late in 1770, and on November 2 of that year the new deed was executed by which the John Street property was transferred to the ownership of the society. It was conveyed by the eight original purchasers in trust to " Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, ministers of the Gospel; William Lupton, merchant; Thomas Webb, gentleman; John Southwell, merchant; Henry Newton, shopkeeper; and James Jarvis, hatter."

Boardman and Pilmoor now alternated between New York and

Philadelphia, but did not confine their labours to those cities. Boardman duplicated Pilmoor's excursions into Maryland and preached in Baltimore, and there is evidence that he went as far north as Boston, forming a small society and preceding Jesse Lee in New England by some seventeen years. However, New England was never fallow ground for the Methodists because of the adherence of the people to the Calvinistic doctrines of Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards, and by the time Asbury sent Lee into the territory slight trace of Boardman's work remained. Pilmoor journeyed into Long Island and Westchester County and laboured diligently with the aid of Captain Webb and Robert Williams, who made occasional trips north from Maryland. Pilmoor and Williams introduced Methodism into the Westchester town of New Rochelle by means of a typical Wesleyan miracle. On their first trip there they found a company gathered for worship at the home of Frederick Deveau, but a clergyman of the Church of England refused to permit Pilmoor to preach. But Mrs. Deveau, lying ill in an adjacent room, saw Pilmoor and shouted glad recognition. She explained that during her illness she had dreamed of wandering in a dismal swamp, without light or guide, and was about to sink down in exhaustion when a stranger appeared with a light and led her to safety. She identified Pilmoor with the apparition of her dream, and appealed to him to preach to the company and lead them out of the swamp of sin with the light of Methodist salvation.[15] He did so, and she was converted, but unfortunately died a few days later. These singular events attracted much attention, and Pilmoor preached with great success to virtually the entire population of New Rochelle. Not long afterwards Asbury formed a society there, and the town was always one of his favorite resorts.

But although Boardman and Pilmoor, with the other local and itinerant preachers, preached with success and formed societies, they made little effort to effect a compact working organization, and no effort at all to hold a conference and divide the territory among the preachers, so that there would be sinning souls for all. The result was a duplication of work, each preacher doing pretty much as he pleased and going wherever fancy dictated. The Lord, through Wesley, had reserved this work of organization and administration for Francis Asbury.

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[1] Atkinson: *History of the Origin of the Wesleyan Movement in America*, pp. 138, 139.

[2] Ibid., p. 140.

[3] Lodge: *A Short History of the English Colonies in America*, p. 337.

[4] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 660.

[5] Emory: *History of the Discipline of the M. E. Church*, p. 228.

[6] *Discipline of the M. E. Church, 1924*, p. 358.

[7] Atkinson: *History of the Origin*, etc., p. 53.

[8] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. I, p. 57.

[9] Daniels: *Illustrated History of Methodism*, p. 390.

[10] Buckley: *History of Methodism in U. S.;* Vol. I, p. 130.

[11] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. I, p. 73.

[12] Atkinson: *History of the Origin*, etc., p. 103.

[13] *The American Mercury*, April 1926, p. 496.

[14] Atkinson: *History of the Origin*, etc., p. 145.

[15] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. I, p. 107.

CHAPTER IV

Paul and Peter

I

ON the day of Francis Asbury's arrival in Philadelphia, with Richard Wright, he prayed five times, read three chapters from the book of Revelation, a hundred pages of Wesley's *Sermons,* and a hundred pages of Jonathan Edwards's account of the New England revivals. Thus fortified, he went that evening to St. George's Church, where " Brother Pilmoor preached acceptably, and the people welcomed us with fervent affection, receiving us as angels of God." The next night, on October 28, 1771, Asbury preached his first sermon in America, although he failed to enter this historic fact in his Journal. A few days later, however, he did record a plea to God to " keep me as the apple of His eye till all the storms of life are past." He remained in Philadelphia for more than a week, accompanying Pilmoor to various preaching places near the city, meeting the classes, and becoming acquainted with the work which had been done in America. As we shall see, he was immediately dissatisfied with it.

On November 6 Asbury preached in Philadelphia on Romans viii.32: " He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? " The next day he and Wright left Philadelphia, Asbury to join Boardman in New York, and Wright to aid Strawbridge and others in Maryland and the South. Wright spent the winter on Bohemia Manor, in Maryland, where George Whitefield had held several notable revivals. But he was never very successful; his tastes appear to have been worldly, and he was constantly on the verge of falling from grace and forgetting that the Methodists had usurped the place in God's affections previously occupied by the Jews. He had considerable ability as a preacher, and was a man of some learning and culture, but he was not able to withstand flattery and attention. Asbury frequently criticized him for his lack of holiness and devotion to the Methodist God. Wright laboured chiefly in Maryland and Virginia, with a few months in New York, and returned to England early in 1774. Two or three years later he located and disappeared from the Methodist ministry. Asbury visited him just before he sailed, but found that he "had no taste for spiritual subjects."

On his way to New Jersey Asbury preached in Burlington, N. J., and was there joined by Peter Van Pelt, a wealthy landowner of Staten Island. They journeyed together, and on the morning of November 11 Asbury preached to a large congregation in the Van Pelt mansion. He preached again in the afternoon, and that evening went to the home of Justice Wright, where he preached twice before midnight. Several persons were converted, and a few sinners fell in fits and convulsions, but Asbury was not satisfied. His concern, as always, was with his own unfitness to represent the Lord, and with his passion for sanctification. "My heart and mouth are open," he wrote that day in his Journal, "only I am still sensible of my deep insufficiency, and that mostly with regard to holiness. It is true, God has given me some gifts, but what are they to holiness? It is for holiness my spirit mourns. I want to walk constantly before God without reproof."

Asbury arrived in New York on November 12. "Now," he wrote, "I must apply myself to my old work — to watch, and fight, and pray. 'Lord, help.'"[1]

He had now girded up his loins and was prepared to undertake the labours to which the Lord had appointed him, and for which he had been conceived and trained by his mother. And since the days of the apostles no religionist had faced a greater opportunity; a whole continent lay open for evangelical exploitation.

2

Arriving in New York with a chip on his shoulder, Asbury immediately cast about for someone to knock it off; he craved a fight, not so much for the mere sake of fighting as for the enjoyment of the holy feelings of self-pity and persecution, which are always implied by trouble. It was not long before he was accommodated, and he achieved an unpopularity among New York and Philadelphia Methodists which did not abate for many years, and to which he referred in his Journals with the utmost satisfaction. At this time he was barely twenty-six years old, and his status in America was clear; he had been sent over the sea by the English Conference as a helper under Richard Boardman, who was General Assistant to John Wesley and in sole command of the work in the New World. However, Boardman had no power of initiative and was deficient in resource and leadership; he possessed the missionary spirit and was a zealous worker for the Methodist God, but he lacked the vision of an evangelical America that so obsessed Asbury and Wesley.

Asbury recognized Boardman's failings, and his own restlessness, his genius for organization and administration, and his passion for spiritual perfection to be gained through holy works, would not permit him to be long content with the conduct of the New York society. He preached his first sermon in New York from I Corinthians ii.2, and thereafter alternated with Boardman in the John Street chapel, each preaching several times a week. But he found nothing to please him. Discipline was lax, some of the Methodists were addicted to fashionable clothing, and there was a general air of gayety which he found extremely distressing. He was also greatly incensed because Boardman insisted that both should remain in the city, as well as Captain Webb, and serve the New York congregation. In Asbury's eyes such a scheme was monstrous, for the new world hungered for the Methodist plan of salvation, and he was eager to begin his evangelistic campaign and save the people in the name of John Wesley. Eight days after his arrival in New York he wrote in his Journal:

> I remain in New York, although unsatisfied with our both being in town together. I have not yet the thing which I seek — a circulation of preachers, to avoid partiality and popularity. However, I am fixed to the Methodist plan, and do what I do faithfully as to God. I expect trouble is at hand. This I expected when I left England, and I am willing to suffer, yea, to die, sooner than betray so good a cause by any means. It will be a hard matter to stand against all opposition, as an iron pillar strong, and steadfast as a wall of brass; but through Christ strengthening me I can do all things.[2]

Two days later, on November 22, he again recorded his uneasiness:

> At present I am dissatisfied. I judge that we are to be shut up in the cities this winter. My brethren seem unwilling to leave the cities, but I think I shall show them the way. I am in trouble, and more trouble is at hand, for I am determined to make a stand against all partiality. I have nothing to seek but the glory of God; nothing to fear but His displeasure. I am come over with an upright intention, and through the grace of God I will make it appear; and I am determined that no man shall bias me with soft words and fair speeches; nor will I ever fear, the Lord helping me, the face of man, or know any man after the flesh, if I beg my bread from door to door; but whomsoever I please or displease, I will be faithful to God, to the people, and to my own soul.[3]

Two days later he entered upon the second great phase of his career. Asking permission from no one, he borrowed a horse and rode with Richard Sause to Westchester, then a backwoods settlement twenty miles from the city, but now within easy reach of the New York subway. There he preached in the court-house from Acts xvii.30: "Now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Sause returned to New York after the meeting, but Asbury went on to West Farms, and back to Westchester the next day. He then rode to New Rochelle, where some time later he founded the third Methodist society in the state, and to Rye, East Chester, Mamaroneck, Philipse Manor and other villages. After a few days he was again in New York, but immediately crossed the Bay to Staten Island, where he preached in the homes of his friends Justice Wright and Peter Van Pelt, and also in the house of Israel Disosway, who became the first class-leader on the island and furnished the timbers for the first Methodist church in that part of the present city of New York.

Asbury had now formed a circuit based on New York, comprising Staten Island and the villages which are now a part of Westchester County, and had fairly begun those amazing travels which, during the next forty-five years, carried him up and down and across the North American continent at an annual rate of not less than five thousand miles. It was while travelling this circuit, riding with scant protection through winter snows and rains, that he first became ill in America. On January 16, 1772, he caught a cold and chill after preaching at Rye. But he refused treatment and pushed on, preaching the following Sunday at three Westchester villages, although he had a high fever and was in such pain that he could stand erect only with great difficulty. The next day he rode to Philipse Manor in a snow-storm, and in the evening went to New Rochelle. He continued to preach and exhort for more than a week, and then collapsed while trying to deliver an exhortation and summon sinners to repentance and salvation according to the Wesleyan formula. Friends put him to bed, and he was not able to move until February 5. During his illness he read much in the Bible, and also in Wesley's *Sermons* and Hammond's *Notes on the New Testament.*

On February 7 Asbury set out for New York in a sleigh which Richard Sause had sent to New Rochelle, and noted in his Journal that his friends seemed glad to see him. But he was not greatly pleased at this slight evidence of returning popularity; he wrote that he wanted to be less concerned about everything except the salvation of souls, and recorded anew his determination to consecrate to God his body, soul, time, and talents. He was still very weak, and was developing a racking cough, but he preached morning, afternoon, and evening of the day of his return, and before retiring read in Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament*. He awoke next morning in great pain, with a raging fever, and was compelled to remain in bed. His friends wanted him to abandon all work and rid himself of his cold, but after two days he insisted upon preaching, and was half carried through the streets to the church, where he delivered a scolding sermon and so proclaimed his return to the fray.

His dissatisfaction with the conduct of the New York Methodists increased, and he continued to berate them for their lack of strict observance of the rules, but for a little while there was no open revolt. During his illness in Westchester, Pilmoor had come to New York, and Boardman had gone to Philadelphia. Asbury started to join the latter, and preached several times daily as he crossed New Jersey on horseback. He arrived at Philadelphia early in April, 1772, and found both Boardman and Wright there. Boardman now decided that he himself should go to Boston for the initial assault upon the capital of the Puritans. He ordered Pilmoor to Virginia and Wright to New York, and told Asbury to remain in Philadelphia. He also decided that Robert Williams, who had been roaming the South as a free-lance agent of Methodism, should go to New York to assist Wright, and travel the Westchester-Staten Island circuit formed by Asbury. Williams was reported at Bohemia Manor, in Maryland, and Asbury set off to find him. They met near Wilmington, and Williams started for Philadelphia to see Boardman and then go to New York, while Asbury continued on his first trip to the South, preaching at various places before returning to Philadelphia. He penetrated to within ninety miles of Baltimore, where King, Williams, and probably Strawbridge had preached, and where Pilmoor had founded a society in 1770, but did not visit the city until several months later.

Asbury was now alone in Philadelphia, with full power, and he began immediately to criticize the manner in which the society was conducted, and to rule its members with characteristic severity. He wrote that he was compelled to preach to the people " with some sharpness," and kept the door at society meeting, refusing to admit those who he felt had not been sufficiently Methodistic. "I heard that many were offended at my shutting them out of society meeting," he wrote, "as they had been greatly indulged before. But this does not trouble me. While I stay, the rules must be attended to, and I cannot suffer myself to be guided by half-hearted Methodists. An elderly Friend told me very gravely that the opinion of the people was much changed, within a few days, about the Methodists, and that the Quakers and other dissenters had relaxed their discipline; that none but the Roman Catholics kept it up with strictness. But these things do not move me." [4]

Although Asbury's duty was now to minister to the spiritual needs of the Philadelphians and prepare them for the eternal glories, he could not keep still, and was soon covering the whole country around the city and far into New Jersey. On many journeys he was accompanied by John King, who, like Williams, was preaching wherever he thought the message of the Wesleys was most needed. Among other places Asbury went to Burlington, Chester, Greenwich, Bristol, Gloucester, and Trenton, preaching several times each day. Several of his discourses were delivered at executions, as he made it a rule to attend as many of these ceremonies as possible. It was his custom to pray with and for the condemned man, and after the trap had been sprung and the body dangled from the gallows, to mount a tree stump or a cart and harangue the multitude on the dangers of sin, with a horrible example immediately at hand and convenient for illustration. Many conversions resulted.

Asbury exchanged with Boardman in the middle of July, and on the twenty-second left Philadelphia, preaching a final discourse on the significant text, "If I come again, I will not spare." As usual, he preached *en route* to New York, in Burlington, Trenton, and Amboy, and on Staten Island, and arrived in New York early in August. There he found Richard Wright, and wrote that the man who had come from England with him had been spoiled by gifts, and had undone all the good work that had been done by holding a general love-feast and relaxing the severity of the rules. This condition Asbury immediately remedied, and a few days later reported that "the congregations are steady." However, there were still mutterings, and a little while later two of the stewards made the first open sign of dissatisfaction with his rule by refusing an exact account of the society's money. One of these was Henry Newton, and to him Asbury spoke sharply. "His conduct did not please me," Asbury wrote, "frequently avoiding to speak to me, absenting himself from the meeting of the leaders, the appearance of dissimulation, opposing our rules, and consulting persons who were not members of our society. He appeared to be somewhat affected by the conversation." [5] Three days afterward Asbury quarreled with William Lupton, the portly merchant who had been one of the founders of the John Street society, who said that the preacher had used Mr. Newton very ill. "Mr. Lupton," Asbury wrote, "told me that I had already preached the people away, and intimated that the whole work would be destroyed by me. Perhaps this was because I spoke so freely to Mr. Newton, and desired him to take care what company he kept." [6]

But Asbury remained unmoved. He threatened to expel all members of the society who were not prepared to accept and abide by his interpretation of the rules, and continued calmly on the path he had set himself. On October 10, 1772, his hand was strengthened, and his power in America made virtually absolute, by a letter from John Wesley, appointing him general assistant and demoting Boardman to the status of a helper. Asbury immediately read this missive to the New York Methodists, and then started for Philadelphia to find Boardman and acquaint him with his new condition. They met at Princeton, where Boardman had gone on a preaching tour. Conscious of his limitations, and glad to be relieved of a leadership that had become irksome, Boardman received the news with a good spirit, and "we both agreed in judgment about the affairs of the society, and were much comforted together." This is Asbury's entry in his Journal, but it is to be suspected that he merely told Boardman what he intended to do.

Having thus been placed in supreme command of all Methodists on the continent, Asbury now resolved to make a tour of his domain. He had just come from New York, so he went on to Philadelphia, circled through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and rode into Maryland. One of his first stops was at the home of Henry Watters, a brother of young William Watters, the second native American itinerant, who had gone into Virginia with Robert Williams. This district was a hotbed of Methodism, and Williams, Strawbridge, Watters, and various local preachers had conducted several successful revivals. "The Lord hath done great things for these people," wrote Asbury, "notwithstanding the weakness of the instruments and some little irregularities. Men who neither feared God nor regarded man — swearers, liars, cock-fighters, card-players, horse-racers, drunkards, etc., are now so changed as to become new men; and they are filled with the praises of God. This is the Lord's work, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Thy name be all the glory."

From the Watters homestead Asbury went to the house of Robert Strawbridge, where a great concourse of people had gathered for services. Among them were some Baptists, but Asbury records that they went away displeased, possibly at the noise and enthusiasm of the Wesleyan preachers. Thereafter the Baptists of this district, and of many other sections of the South as well, hampered the work of the Methodists whenever possible. Asbury preached also at the home of Joshua Owings, or Owen, whose son, Richard, was the second native local preacher. A few days later Asbury stopped again at Strawbridge's home for lodging, and several polite people came to dine, among them Dr. Warfield, a noted physician of the district. Asbury upbraided the fashionable ladies for the size of their head-dresses and the multitude of their gold and silver ornaments, but Dr. Warfield defended them, declaring that religion did not consist in dress. Asbury left in a huff and set out for Frederick. "A poor, unhappy man abused me much on the road," he wrote. "He cursed, swore, and threw stones at me. But I found it my duty to talk to him and show him his danger."

Asbury was now joined by John King, and they went through

Charlestown, into Bohemia Manor and into Kent County, returning to the home of James Presbury, in Frederick County, on December 23, 1772, for the quarterly meeting. The gathering was peaceful enough until the question of administering the sacraments arose. " Brother Strawbridge pleaded much for the ordinances," wrote Asbury, " and so did the people, who appeared to be much biased by him. I told them I would not agree to it at that time, and insisted on our abiding by our rules. But Mr. Boardman had given them their way at the quarterly meeting held here before, and I was obliged to connive at some things for the sake of peace." [7]

This was the first trouble that Asbury had with Strawbridge over the ordinances, but it was by no means the last. The controversy became more bitter until it threatened to engulf the whole of American Methodism, and Asbury was at last compelled to control Strawbridge by leaving his name off the Conference Minutes, and giving him no appointment. Strawbridge settled as preacher to the Sam's Creek and Brush Forest societies, and finally went to Long Green, Baltimore County, where Captain Charles Ridgely gave him a farm free of rent. There Strawbridge spent his remaining days. Asbury's dislike of him, and his indignation that a local preacher should have taken such powers upon himself, never lessened, and when Strawbridge died, he wrote in his Journal:

> He is no more; upon the whole I am inclined to think the Lord took him away in judgment because he was in a way to do hurt to His cause, and that He saved him in mercy, because from his death-bed conversation he appears to have had hope in his end.[8]

Asbury was very ill during this period, but he would not rest, and on January 3, 1773, made his first visit to Baltimore, preaching at the home of Captain Patten, at Fell's Point. That afternoon he preached at the house of William Moore, and in the evening at Mrs. Triplett's. He obtained many converts and laboured with enthusiasm, so that it soon became necessary to find larger quarters. Accordingly the Baltimore Methodists rented a sail loft at Mills and Block Streets, which was used until the erection of the Strawberry Alley and Lovely Lane chapels the following year. Asbury found that the society, which had been organized by Pilmoor, was loosely governed, with no responsible head, the members meeting for prayer or preaching without any definite program. He found also a laxity in discipline and an inattention to the rules that irked his methodical soul, and he immediately began, as he said, to " settle the classes." The night of his arrival in the city he organized a class of men and appointed a leader, and the following day a class of women.

This work occupied Asbury's entire attention for about two weeks, after which he again became restless, and began to itinerate around Baltimore, despite his illness and the unfavourable weather. He formed a circuit, based on the city, consisting of about twenty-four appointments and extending more than two hundred miles; over this he travelled every three weeks, preaching and praying in public at every opportunity. It was his rule to deliver a sermon whenever he could get two or more people together, no matter what the hour or the circumstances, and in later years he often preached to one person. In this new district he was assisted by many of the local preachers and exhorters who had been converted and licensed by Strawbridge, Williams and Pilmoor. Among them were such noted Methodists as Owen, Watters, Richard Webster, Nathaniel Perigau, Isaac Rollins, Hezekiah Bonham, Nicholas Watters, Sater Stephenson, James Presbury, Philip Gatch, Aquila Standford, and Abraham Rollins.

The people of Maryland were now falling before the Methodist itinerants like grain before a sickle, and the whole state seethed with religious feeling. But trouble was brewing in the north. Late in February Asbury received letters from New York and Philadelphia advising him of the dissatisfaction that still existed there, and some time later Pilmoor wrote him in the severest terms, protesting against the military discipline upon which Asbury insisted. Richard Wright also wrote objecting to Asbury's domination, and the latter immediately mounted his horse and started north to mend his fences and subdue the insurgents. He preached daily *en route,* and arrived in New York early in April, but disquieting rumours reached him from Philadelphia, and within a few days he set out across New Jersey, preaching as he went. He found that some of the Philadelphia Methodists were still displeased with him, but observed that he " must declare the whole counsel to God and leave the event to him."

Meanwhile Captain Thomas Webb and his wife had gone to England, and the Captain attended the English conference at Leeds on August 4, 1772. He addressed the English preachers on the needs of the American Methodists, and implored the Wesleys to send more preachers to the New World. He particularly stressed the need of an experienced disciplinarian, a man who could bring order out of the chaos into which American Methodism appeared to be headed because of the stubbornness of Asbury and the disinclination of Boardman, Pilmoor, and the other preachers to place themselves under the supervision of so young a man. Thomas Rankin and George Shadford volunteered as missionaries, and were accepted, Wesley appointing Rankin general assistant, or superintendent, of the American societies. Both he and Shadford were commanding figures in British Methodism, with considerable experience on the English circuits, and with a full knowledge of the desires and methods of John Wesley. They were instructed to sail with Captain and Mrs. Webb the following spring, and as the time drew near, Wesley wrote to Shadford:

> Dear George, the time has arrived for you to embark for America. You must go down to Bristol, where you will meet with Thomas Rankin, Captain Webb, and his wife. I let you loose, George, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can.[9]

Shadford immediately rode to Bristol, where he recognized the wharf and the ship on which he was to sail as those which he had seen in a vision six years before, when the Lord appeared and wrote on a cloud in letters of gold the message "Go and preach the Gospel in a foreign land."[10] Naturally, this gave him much comfort, as it established beyond question the divine inspiration of the enterprise. At the last moment the party was augmented by Joseph Yearbry, a Wesleyan preacher who made the voyage on his own responsibility, and the ship sailed on Good Friday, April 9, 1773. On the first of June they came to anchor in the Delaware River opposite Chester, and two days later were welcomed in Philadelphia by Asbury and the Methodist society. The former, at least, greeted Rankin with great relief. "To my great comfort," he wrote, "arrived Mr. Rankin." After Rankin's first sermon, in Philadelphia, he wrote: "He will not be admired as a preacher, but as a disciplinarian he will fill his place."[11]

Rankin found 1,160 avowed Methodists in America. Of these New York and Philadelphia had 180 each; New Jersey, 200; Maryland, 500; Virginia, 100. It is likely that there were also several hundred others who considered themselves Methodists, but were not active in the societies.

3

Francis Asbury and Captain Webb went to New York after the former had reported to Rankin on the state of the American societies, and George Shadford hastened into New Jersey, where he bagged his first trophies on this continent. He laboured there for more than a month with great success, adding thirty-five members to the societies and causing many sinners to tremble and fear for their souls. Rankin, more emphatic even than Asbury in his advocacy of strict discipline and adherence to the rules, was dissatisfied both with the growth in Methodist membership and with the laxity evident in all societies. He complained that nowhere was the discipline properly attended to save in New York and Philadelphia, where Asbury's insistence had begun to bear fruit.

Beset by difficulties of organization and harassed by dissatisfied preachers and society members, Asbury had not been able to arrange a systematic stationing of the Methodist itinerants and local preachers. This matter Rankin proposed to attend to at once, and sent out notices for all the Methodist preachers on the continent, if possible, to meet him in Philadelphia. He designed to hold a conference similar to the annual gatherings in England, and to conduct the affairs of the Methodist societies on an orderly basis. Nine preachers, besides Rankin himself, responded, and the first Methodist conference in America began in St. George's Church on July 14, 1773, and continued for two days. There were present Thomas Rankin, Richard Boardman, Joseph Pilmoor, Francis Asbury, Richard Wright, George Shadford, Thomas Webb, John King, Abraham Whitworth, and Joseph Yearbry. Neither Strawbridge nor Robert Williams was able to reach Philadelphia in time, nor did any of the local preachers of the various districts attend. Asbury did not arrive from New York until the second day of the session, and records that he did not " find such perfect harmony as I could wish for," and that " there were some debates among the preachers in this conference relative to the conduct of some who had manifested a desire to abide in the cities and live like gentlemen. Three years out of four have already been spent in the cities. It was also found that money had been wasted, improper leaders appointed and many of our rules broken."

The Conference appointed Asbury and Whitworth to the Baltimore circuit, and two hours after the session had adjourned, Asbury was astride his horse and hastening southward, although he was very ill from fever and an ulcerated throat. He preached constantly *en route,* and within two weeks arrived at James Presbury's, across the Maryland border, where he presided at the regular quarterly meeting and read the minutes of the Philadelphia conference to Robert Strawbridge and the other Maryland preachers. The rule relating to the sacraments appears to have been final and absolute, but Asbury recorded that an exception was made in the case of Strawbridge, who was to be " permitted to baptize and serve the Holy Supper under the particular direction of the assistant." However, Strawbridge refused to acknowledge Rankin's overlordship, and would accept no restrictions.

He insisted that his call to the ministry was unquestionably and admittedly divine, and that he had an equally divine right to administer the ordinances. In this contention he was supported by many of the southern itinerants and local preachers, and by the preachers generally.

The bitterness engendered by the controversy with Strawbridge had much to do with the failure of Rankin's labours in America; by insisting that the Methodists receive the ordinances from the priests of the Established Church he aroused a feeling of distrust and antagonism before he had been in America more than a few weeks. Rankin himself was thoroughly trained in humble submission to the Church of England, and endeavoured to enforce a like submission in this country. He failed to see, as Asbury saw, that Methodism, although at this time only a religious society, was rapidly becoming independent of the Established Church, and that it was only a question of time before the break would be actual and permanent, both in this country and in England. Further, the Revolutionary movement was daily gathering impetus, and throughout the country there was a growing distrust of the English clergy, who were not only denouncing the Americans for their disloyalty to the Crown, but were leaving the colonies in large numbers and returning to Europe. And in the greater part of America there had never been the traditional feeling of attachment to the Church that there was in England; on the contrary, there was avowed enmity in many sections, and much complaint against taxation for religious purposes.

The American Methodists began almost immediately to object to Rankin's disciplinary methods, which they regarded as unreasonably harsh. As a matter of fact he was no more stern than Francis Asbury, but unlike Asbury he had no political sense; he drove straight ahead with no regard for local conditions and circumstances, while Asbury manipulated the itinerants and the conferences as a political boss manipulates the delegates to a convention. He played preacher against preacher, and faction against faction, with slight concessions and compromises about which he made a great to-do, and in consequence had his own way most of the time. It was characteristic of him that he did not attempt to compel Strawbridge to abandon the administration of the sacraments, but concentrated his efforts on preventing others from following the Irishman's example. In this he succeeded, and when the time came, he simply dropped Strawbridge from the itinerant ranks. But had he attempted to do so immediately after the first conference, even with Rankin's authority, there would have been open revolt in Maryland and Virginia.

Rankin was also opposed to the emotional excesses and extravagances which had come to be an accepted feature of the Methodist revivals, and clashed on this point with Asbury and other leaders. The members of the New York society were especially incensed at Rankin because he tried to stop an exciting and therefore successful soul harvest in progress there. He declared that such meetings tended to disgrace religion by the destruction of order. Asbury conceded that many of the things which happened under the lash of evangelistic fury were not good and did not redound to the glory of the Methodist God, but he advised Rankin that it would not be well to interfere; the people loved their seasons of passionate excitement, and were convinced that the only way to go to heaven was to first experience a considerable degree of insanity and emotional unheaval. Unable to understand this viewpoint, Rankin continued to insist upon the enforcement of his ideas. His troubles were soon increased by reports of actual fighting between the British and Continental troops, and he was constantly torn between his desire to save the souls of the colonists and his horror at what he considered their treachery to England. At length, after the Battle of Long Island, he abandoned the infant church and hastened northward from Virginia, entering the English lines. Soon thereafter he sailed for London, where he spent the remainder of his life as a Wesleyan local preacher and class leader. In a letter some years later Asbury said of him:

> It appeared to me that his object was to sweep the continent of every preacher that Mr. Wesley sent to it, and of every respectable travelling preacher of Europe who had

> graduated among us, whether English or Irish. He told us that if we returned to our native country we would be esteemed such obedient, loyal subjects that we would obtain ordination in the grand Episcopal Church of England, and come back to America with high respectability after the war was ended.[12]

Asbury returned to Baltimore from the quarterly meeting at Presbury's with the promises of all Methodist preachers except Strawbridge not to administer the sacraments except in cases of dire necessity, and then only after consultation with him as the chief preacher of the Baltimore circuit and commander of the Maryland itinerancy. He preached at Mrs. Triplett's after his arrival in the city, and the next day at Moore's and Captain Patten's. He then resumed his travels about Baltimore circuit, now enlarged to some thirty appointments. He was very ill, and his condition daily grew worse, but he would not rest or spare the time for medical treatment. He applied a blister behind his ear for a pain in his head, dosed himself with home-made medicines, and set out on the road, preaching several times each day at his regular places and holding services elsewhere as often as he could bring two or more people together. He now began to pray ten minutes out of each hour while travelling, and daily implored heavenly consideration for every Methodist preacher on the continent, mentioning each by name. This practice he continued for several years, until the number of itinerants became so great that he did not have time to read a list of them, much less offer a supplication for each.

With the aid of the local preachers and exhorters Asbury kept his circuit in a furore of religious excitement, and now laid the foundation for the great Baltimore revival of 1789, when services continued without interruption day after day, while the whole city was in an emotional uproar. He also advocated the early building of Methodist churches in Baltimore, and in November 1773 a lot fronting on Strawberry Alley and on Fleet Street was purchased by Asbury, Jesse Hollingsworth, George Wells, Richard Moale, George Robinson, and John Woodward. Construction work was begun at once on the first Methodist meeting-house in the city. The building was of brick, forty-one feet and six inches long and thirty feet wide, with a twenty-inch foundation. The original entrance was on Fleet Street, with a gallery on the Strawberry Alley side for the Negroes. A very high tub pulpit was installed, and over the preacher's head hung a sounding-board, suspended by a cord. Behind the pulpit was a large semi-circle of blue, on which was painted in huge gold letters, "Thou, God, seest me!" The second Methodist preaching house in Baltimore was begun in April 1774 on a lot in Lovely Lane, purchased by William Moore and Philip Rogers. This building was the seat of the organization conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784, but eventually gave way to the Light Street church a block away. When the Milk Street church was erected in 1801, the structure in Strawberry Alley was given to the slaves. By that time the African Methodist Episcopal Church had been organized under the leadership of Richard Allen, a former Virginia slave who had been ordained by Asbury and who became the first bishop of the new denomination.

During his early ministry in Baltimore Asbury became acquainted with Harry Dorsey Gough, one of the wealthiest and most influential planters in Maryland. The Gough estate, Perry Hall, only a few miles from the city, was one of the show-places of the colony, and he is said to have possessed a fortune in lands, slaves, and money amounting to more than $300,000. His wife was a daughter of Governor Ridgeley. Gough was converted by Asbury, slipped back into sin, and was again converted, becoming at length an extraordinarily devout Methodist. He erected a chapel on his estate for the use of his slaves and family, which was supplied by the itinerants and local preachers of the Baltimore and other circuits. This was the first Methodist meeting-house in America to have a bell. He was for many years one of Asbury's closest friends, and his home was always open for the entertainment and lodging of travelling Methodist preachers.

Asbury was also instrumental in bringing to Baltimore the Rev. Philip William Otterbein, who had come to America in 1752 as a preacher of the German Reformed Church, and had settled in Pennsylvania. His religious tendencies were decidedly Methodistic, and he soon found the doctrines and preachers of the Reformed congregations too Calvinistic for his taste. Accordingly he broke away, and with Asbury's assistance came to Baltimore and established the Evangelical Reformed Church. He was supported by the Rev. Mr. Swope, the regular Lutheran pastor in Baltimore, and both introduced Methodist doctrine and practice into their preaching. Otterbein later became the founder of the United Brethren in Christ, sometimes called the German Methodists. This denomination held its first conference in Baltimore in 1789, with seven preachers in attendance, and within a few years had a rapid growth. At the conference of 1800 Otterbein was chosen bishop, as was Martin Boehm, whose son, the Rev. Henry Boehm, was Asbury's travelling companion for many years. Eventually a university was founded by the sect, and named for Otterbein.

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The second Methodist conference met in Philadelphia on May 27, 1774. The statistical returns showed ten circuits, seventeen preachers, and 2,073 members of the societies, an increase during the year of four circuits, seven preachers, and 913 members. Most of this gain was due to Asbury's laborious work in Maryland, which reported two new circuits — Kent and Frederick — and 563 new members. In one year Asbury had tripled the number of Maryland circuits and doubled the number of Methodists. The work of Robert Williams in Virginia also showed important results, principally in the organization of the famous Brunswick circuit, which was the scene of a great revival the following year. In New Jersey Methodism had grown so rapidly that the colony was now divided into two circuits, Trenton and Greenwich.

It was at this conference, at Asbury's suggestion, that the practice of inquiring into the characters of the preachers, especially those received on trial or probation, was begun, and thereafter it was a regular part of the procedure. The examination was conducted with great strictness, the name of the preacher being called and the assembled brethren invited to speak if they knew anything against him. Memoirs of the old itinerants show the diligence with which tales were told. One young man was complained of because he had put on a girl's bonnet; he was haled before the conference and asked if she was a pretty girl. The answer, however, is not recorded. Another was accused of shaving on Sunday, and another had not shaved off all his beard, so that he presented a somewhat frazzled appearance. Still another wore a dress-coat, contrary to the habits of devout Methodists; others were too light in conversation, betraying a regrettable and unseemly tendency to joke and laugh.

Rankin's disciplinary methods still excited comment and animosity among the preachers; they resented his insistence that the procedure of the English conferences should be followed exactly. "The overbearing spirit of a certain person (Rankin) has excited my fears," wrote Asbury. " My judgment was stubbornly opposed for awhile, and at last submitted to. But it is my duty to bear all things with a meek and patient spirit. My mind and body have been much fatigued during the time of this conference, and if I were not deeply conscious of the truth and goodness of the cause in which I am engaged, I should by no means stay here. Lord, what a world this is! Yea, what a religious world! Oh, keep my heart pure and my garments unspotted from the world! "[13]

Asbury wished to return to Baltimore, but Rankin insisted that he go to New York. He was very ill, but set out immediately, and on the day of his arrival preached three times in the John Street church. In his Journal he commented rather sardonically on the reception accorded him by some of the influential members of the society who had opposed and denounced him on his previous visit. " How wonderfully," he wrote, " is the language and behaviour of Mr. Lupton changed toward me! Before, I was everything that was bad, but now all is very good. This is a mistake; my doctrine and preaching are the same, and so is my manner, but such is the deceitfulness of the man. His favourite, Mr. Wright, is now gone. Had I preached like an archangel, it would have been to no purpose while I thought it my duty to oppose him." [14] He soon convinced the New York Methodists that he was unchanged; he found them as lax and heedless of the rules as they had previously been, and he was compelled to speak sharply to them on several occasions, and to bar many from the class and band meetings.

The friction between Asbury and Rankin increased in bitterness; until the departure of the latter for England Asbury's journals contain many references to Rankin's unreasonableness and the harshness of his methods. While he was in New York, he received several letters from Rankin which caused him great concern. "Satan," he wrote, "makes use of all his cunning and his tricks. But the Lord will rebuke him. My duty is clear, to bear all things patiently, and silently commit my cause to God. Even in this city there are some restless minds who are not much disposed to spiritual union. Going into the pulpit this evening, I found an inflammatory letter, without a name. My trials are multiplied and weighty, but, glory to God! he strengthens and comforts me by an abundant manifestation of his love." [15]

Asbury remained in New York four months, preaching two or three times each day in the city and in Westchester County, and on Staten Island. He was then relieved by Martin Rodda and James Dempster, official missionaries from the English conference, and by William Glendenning, who had crossed the Atlantic as a volunteer preacher. Dempster had been ten years in the Wesleyan itinerancy in England, but his health failed soon after he came to this country; he then married, and soon afterward, in 1775, retired from the Methodist connexion. He became a Presbyterian minister and settled in Florida, N. Y., where he died in 1804. Rodda was also an experienced preacher, but began to meddle in politics almost immediately, and tried to interfere with the Revolution. Finally he was accused of circulating the King's proclamation in Delaware, where he was stationed, and was compelled to flee the country. With the aid of slaves he reached the British lines in Philadelphia and soon returned to England. Glendenning, always Asbury's bitter enemy, followed Dempster's example and eventually left the Methodist itinerancy.

From New York Asbury went to Philadelphia, where he remained for three months, preaching almost every day, although seriously ill. "My friends," he wrote, "affectionately lamented over me." Later he felt better, and was conscious of a "solemn, grateful sense of God's goodness. My all of body, soul, and time, are his due, and should be devoted, without the least reserve, to his glory. Oh that he may give me grace sufficient! I am still getting better, but am not able to speak in public, though the word of the Lord is like fire within me and I am almost weary of forbearing. My mind is filled with pure, evangelical peace."

As soon as he was able to travel, Asbury hurried to Baltimore, ignoring Rankin's orders to remain in the north, and with returning health began again his continual round of preaching and reading the Bible, and of supplication for grace and sanctification. George Shadford had been appointed to the Baltimore circuit by the conference of 1774, and had as assistants Richard Webster, Robert Lindsey, and Edward Dromgoole. Under his direction the word was progressing, and Methodism becoming firmly established, but he welcomed Asbury, and the latter immediately assumed charge. Asbury remained in Maryland, except for a few short preaching tours into Virginia, until the spring of 1775, when he went to Philadelphia to attend the conference. During this period he and Shadford became close friends, and laboured together in and about Baltimore and throughout the whole of Maryland, adding new appointments to the circuits, conducting revival meetings, enforcing the discipline and rules with great strictness, and converting many sinners.

Meanwhile in the north Rankin was trying to destroy Asbury's influence with the preachers and the people by talking against him and belittling him as a mischief-maker. In a few places Rankin succeeded, later causing Asbury much trouble, but generally he failed, for he continued also to criticize and denounce the colonists for their disloyalty to the King. The temperature of the Americans at this time was at fever-heat; they had little patience with this sort of talk, and Rankin's attitude, and that of Rodda and Dempster and other English missionaries, was storing up trouble which later broke out into open persecution of all Methodist preachers, both native and foreign. "Mr. Rankin keeps driving away at the people," wrote Asbury, "telling them how bad they are, with the wonders which he has done and intends to do. It is surprising that the people are not out of patience with him. If they did not like his friends better than him, we should soon be welcomed to take a final leave of him." [16]

Rumours of the trouble between Asbury and Rankin had reached England, and both wrote to John Wesley. Asbury showed his letters to Rankin before he sent them, but the latter did not return the courtesy, and his reports succeeded in prejudicing the owner of Methodism against Asbury. On March 1, 1775, Wesley wrote to Rankin:

> Dear Tommy: As soon as possible you must come to a full and clear explanation with Brother Asbury and Jemmy Dempster. But I advise Brother Asbury to return to England the first opportunity.[17]

The reference to Dempster probably relates to his determination to abandon the Methodist ministry. Less than two months later, on April 21, Wesley wrote to Rankin: "Brother Asbury has sent me a few lines, and I thank him for them. But I do not advise him to go to Antigua. Let him come home without delay." And on May 19 he wrote: "I doubt not but Brother Asbury and you will part friends; I hope I shall see him at the conference. He is quite an upright man. I apprehend he will go through his work more cheerfully when he is within a little distance from me." [18]

Rankin presented these letters to Asbury and requested him to obey Wesley's command at once. But Asbury refused to leave America. He was a man of infinitely greater vision than Rankin; from the beginning he appears to have foreseen the success of the Revolution and the independence of the American colonies, and there is ample evidence that he had always intended to cast his lot with them. He saw, also, that Rankin's conduct and that of the other English clergymen was such that it was only a matter of time before they would either be imprisoned by the colonial authorities or compelled to leave the country. And this, he realized, would again give him control of the Methodist organization, which Rankin, on orders from Wesley, had assumed. " It is thought by many," he wrote early in 1775, " that there will be an alteration in the affairs of our church government."

On August 7 Asbury recorded in his Journal his final reply to Rankin's command to join the other English preachers in the exodus from America:

> I received a letter from Mr. Thomas Rankin, in which he informed me that himself, Mr. Rodda, and Mr. Dempster had consulted, and deliberately concluded it would be best to return to England. But I can by no means agree to leave such a field for gathering souls to Christ as we have in America. It would be an eternal dishonour to the Methodists that we should all leave three thousand souls who desire to commit themselves to our care. Neither is it the part of a good shepherd to leave his flock in time of danger; therefore I am determined, by the grace of God, not to leave them, let the consequences be what they may. Our friends here appeared to be distressed above measure at the thought of being forsaken by the preachers. So I wrote my sentiment to Mr. Thomas Rankin and Mr. George Shadford.[19]

Asbury's letter to Rankin has not been preserved, but it was probably of considerable sharpness, for a few weeks later he mentioned that Rankin had changed his plans and intended to remain in America. However, in less than two years Rankin had gone. Asbury's decision to remain was one of the most momentous in the history of American Methodism. Had he returned to England, the Methodists in this country would have been left without an experienced leader, and in all likelihood the societies would have disintegrated and the membership gone to other churches; in any event the growth of the movement would have been seriously retarded. It required a strong hand and a courageous mind to control the Methodists and keep their organization intact during the

Revolution, when to be a member of the society was to be suspected of allegiance to the King of England.

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The conference of 1775, held in Philadelphia within a month after the Battle of Lexington, appointed Asbury to Norfolk, Va., where Robert Williams had implanted Methodism and worked a miracle on the night of his arrival on this continent, and where Richard Wright had been the first regular Methodist pastor. Asbury grieved greatly at finding only thirty members of the society in Norfolk, with no meeting-place except an old shattered building which had been a playhouse, and with no class organization. " Surely," he wrote, " the Lord will not always suffer his honour to be trampled in the dust." However, he plunged into the work with characteristic energy, held a revival meeting, added new converts to the society, and started a subscription list for a new building, raising about thirty-four pounds the first day. He also formed a large circuit, with Norfolk as his head-quarters, and including Portsmouth and about eight other appointments in adjoining districts. He also enforced the rules with great strictness, although " some of the members seemed a little refractory in submitting to it."

Asbury was in Norfolk when he received Rankin's letter about returning to England, and a few months later, having arranged with local preachers of the circuit to handle the work, he set off for Brunswick circuit in Virginia, where George Shadford and four assistants had been sent by the Philadelphia conference. This was part of the parish of the Rev. Dr. Jarratt, the Church of England clergyman with evangelical leanings, and an almost continuous revival had been in progress there for several years. It began under Jarratt's ministry alone, but Robert Williams added evangelistic fuel to the flames, and the fire spread rapidly. " God is at work in this part of the country," wrote Asbury as he approached, " and my soul catches the holy fire already." The revival reached its peak with the arrival of George Shadford, who apportioned the territory and sinners among himself and the local preachers and set to work with great energy. There was almost continuous preaching throughout the length and breadth of Brunswick circuit, and that part of Virginia became the scene of the most remarkable religious excitement the continent had seen since the labours of Jonathan Edwards in New England. The war was forgotten while vast multitudes attended the meetings in the chapels, in private homes, and in the fields, and by the end of the year 1,800 new members had been added to the Methodist societies. All of the services were attended by miracles, and by the curious physical manifestations and emotional excesses so characteristic of methodistic religion.

During this period Asbury recorded the admittance of Francis Poythress, James Foster, and Joseph Hartley as travelling preachers. These men became noted figures in the southern itinerancy, and Asbury became so fond of Poythress that some years later he asked the conference to appoint him bishop. But the appointment was not made, and eventually Poythress went insane through over-devotion to religion, as did many other early Methodist itinerants who hungered after salvation to the exclusion of every other interest and thought. Few had minds sufficiently strong to withstand years of constant emotional strain, for each Methodist preacher laboured to make his ministry a continuous revival, and was not satisfied unless his preaching was accompanied by fits, convulsions, and other excesses.

Asbury remained in Virginia until the following February. The revival, which had given him great delight and caused him to record in his Journal his amaze at the exploits of the preachers, continued for another year.

From Virginia Asbury went to Baltimore, where he found the city in commotion because of a report that a British war-ship was approaching to shell the defenses. He rode out to Perry Hall, home of his friend Harry Gough, and for a month preached in and around Baltimore. In March he went to Philadelphia, having travelled about three thousand miles since leaving that city on the twenty-second of the preceding May. Here he received a letter from Wesley. He does not divulge its contents, but recorded this comment in his Journal: " I am truly sorry that the venerable man ever dipped into the politics of America. My desire is to live in love and peace with all men; to do them no harm, but all the good I can. However, it discovers Mr. Wesley's conscientious attachment to the government under which he lives. Had he been a subject of America, no doubt he would have been as zealous an advocate of the American cause. But some inconsiderate persons have taken occasion to censure the Methodists in America on account of his political sentiments." Soon afterward he received word that troops were being recruited in New York and fortifications erected in anticipation of an attack by the English Army. " O Lord," he writes, " we are oppressed; undertake thou for us."

Asbury found the Methodists in Philadelphia looked on with suspicion, and distracted by the martial clamours which filled the land. He immediately set about rallying them and enforcing the discipline and rules, and wrote disapprovingly that the people had permitted their minds to become filled with the war, and had neglected their duties as followers of Wesley. He was very ill, but itinerated around Philadelphia and through New Jersey, doing his utmost to encourage the disheartened Methodists and keep the societies intact. He was not able, because of his illness, to attend the annual conference, but received word that he had been appointed to Baltimore. Starting south on the last day of May, he found that the attitude of the people and officials of Maryland had changed, even toward himself; he had hardly set foot in the colony before he was arrested and fined ten pounds for neglecting to obtain a civil license to preach. This law had been long on the Maryland statute-books, but had been inoperative; it was revived with a view to limiting the activities of the Church of England clergymen who yet remained in this country.

Excessive preaching and travelling had made Asbury's health a matter of great concern to his friends, and at the insistence of Harry Gough and Philip Rogers he consented to go to Warm Sulphur Springs for relaxation and recuperation. However, he could not keep still, and after he had been two days at the Springs got out of bed, found a few Methodist sympathizers, and preached to them. A few days later he wrote, " My present mode of conduct is as follows: to read about a hundred pages a day; usually to pray in public five times a day; to preach in the open air every other day, and to lecture in prayer-meeting every evening." His ministry began to show results, even in a resort frequented by fashionable people. " It clearly appears that I am in the line of my duty in attending the springs," he wrote; " there is a manifest check to the overflowing tide of immorality, and the prejudices of many people are in a great degree removed. So that I hope my visit to this place will be for the benefit of the souls of some, as well as for the benefit of my own body." However, he did not accomplish as much as he had hoped, for when he left the Springs he characterized it as " the best and worst place that I ever was in — good for health, but most injurious to religion."

He returned to Baltimore after six weeks of this " relaxation," and began to travel about the circuits, riding ten, twenty, forty miles a day and preaching whenever he could find a congregation or a preaching place, adding more than a thousand persons to the membership of the society during the year. Early in 1777 he was informed that the state capital at Annapolis was a place of peculiar ungodliness, notoriously unreligious and rife with atheism. He immediately left Joseph Hartley in charge of the Baltimore circuit and set out to evangelize Annapolis. He preached his first sermon to half a dozen people who heard him mainly through curiosity, but when he departed in May to attend the conference of 1777 at Deer Creek, Harford County, Maryland, he left a strong society organization, and preached his last sermon to a congregation of more than four hundred. Several members of the Maryland Assembly were among his converts.

Asbury, Rankin, Shadford, and other leading figures in the Methodist itinerancy held an unofficial caucus at Perry Hall, and definitely settled several questions which they proposed to bring before the Deer Creek meeting. It was proposed that Rankin be permitted to administer the sacraments, but this was voted down unanimously. Another suggestion was that, in view of the impending departure of Rankin for England, a group of preachers be selected to superintend the societies when they should be left without a general assistant. This was adopted by the conference, and a committee named consisting of William Watters, Philip Gatch, Daniel Ruff, Edward Dromgoole, and William Glendenning. The conference also gave certificates of character to Rankin, Shadford, Rodda, and the other Englishmen who intended to leave, but the American preachers insisted they serve as long as possible. Accordingly Shadford was appointed to Maryland and Rodda to Delaware. It was soon after this that Rodda began to circulate the King's proclamation, and had to flee to the British lines.

Rankin gave himself no appointment, and Asbury was also left off the list of stations. Methodist historians have been puzzled by the omission of Asbury's name, and many of them have concluded that it was Rankin's final manifestation of power and his last thrust at the man who had fought him so vigorously and consistently in America. Others, however, disagree. They believe that Asbury had arranged to assume control the moment Rankin left, and that, in view of the unsettled conditions prevailing at the time, it was thought wiser not to burden him with a definite appointment to a circuit. This would explain not only the omission of his name from the appointments, but from the membership of the governing committee as well.

Within a month after the conference Rankin had embarked for England, and Asbury immediately assumed the superintendency of the Methodist organization, so it makes little difference whether or not such an arrangement was made with Rankin. He went from Deer Creek back to Annapolis, which had now become a part of the Baltimore circuit, and soon extended his domination over the whole of Maryland. He planned a tour of the southern stations, and intended then to go north to New York, Philadelphia and New Jersey, but received word that George Shadford planned to sail immediately for England, and so was compelled to remain in Baltimore to look after the Methodists there. But the Maryland authorities, suspicious of all Methodists and particularly of foreign Wesleyan preachers, informed him that he could not stay unless he took the oath of allegiance to the new government. This Asbury declined to do. There was no question of his friendship for the colonists, or of his belief that their cause was just, but as a conscientious servant of the Methodist God he could not accept an oath. He therefore crossed the state line and repaired to Delaware, where no oath was required. There he found an asylum in the home of Judge Thomas White of the Kent County Court of Common Pleas, a High Churchman but for many years Asbury's friend. "I was under some heaviness of mind," he wrote, "but it was no wonder; three thousand miles from home, my friends have left me, I am considered by some as an enemy of the country, every day liable to be seized by violence and abused. However, all this is but a trifle to suffer for Christ and the salvation of souls. Lord, stand by me!"

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[1] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 8.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., p. 19.
[5] Ibid., p. 30.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., p. 36.
[8] Ibid., p. 200.
[9] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church*; Vol. I, p. 156.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 46.
[12] Carroll: *Francis Asbury in the Making of American Methodism*, p. 78.
[13] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 65.
[14] Ibid., p. 68.
[15] Ibid., p. 72.
[16] Ibid., p. 78.
[17] Buckley: *History of Methodism in U. S.*; Vol. I, p. 206.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 87.

CHAPTER V

The First Methodist Magician

ABRAHAM WHITWORTH, whom the first Methodist conference sent with Francis Asbury to Baltimore, occupies a unique place in the history of American Methodism. He was at once its first apostate, the first preacher expelled from the ministry, and the man who gave the sect its first great native evangelist. Whitworth was an Englishman, and there is no record of how and when he came to this country. But he is known to have laboured with Asbury, Captain Webb, and George Shadford in New Jersey as early as 1773, and it is not unlikely that he sailed from England on the ship that brought Rankin to America.

Whitworth's remarkable trophy was the Rev. Benjamin Abbott, a native of Pennsylvania who floundered in the morasses of sin until his fortieth year, when he was converted under Whitworth's preaching and forthwith became a flail of the Methodist Lord. He was the first Methodist to possess really magical powers, and is believed to have obtained more converts than any other Wesleyan preacher except John Wesley and George Whitefield, and possibly Robert Williams. He first appeared in the Methodist connexion as a free-lance preacher soon after his conversion in 1773, but did not join the conference until 1789. He then remained in hot pursuit of the Devil until June 1796, when he expired at the age of sixty-four, clapping his hands in holy glee and shouting that he saw the pearly gates of heaven opened wide to receive him, with a band of handsome angels waiting to escort him into the presence of the Almighty. But this was not the first time Abbott had seen heaven and God. When he was thirty-three years old, he dreamed two dreams, some six weeks apart, in which both heaven and hell were set before him for inspection. In later years he wrote a remarkable narrative of his spiritual adventures, in which he described the celestial and infernal wonders. He thus depicted heaven:

> I dreamed that I died and was carried into one of the most beautiful places I ever saw, and my guide brought me to one of the most elegant buildings I ever beheld, and when we came to it, the gates opened to us of their own accord, and we went straight forward into the building, where we were met by a company of the heavenly host, arrayed in white raiment down to their feet. We passed on through the entry until we came to a door on the right, which stood about half open; passing a little forward, we made a stand before the door; I looked in and saw the Ancient of Days sitting upon His throne, and all around him appeared a dazzling splendour. I stood amazed at the sight; one stepped forward to me arrayed in white, which I knew to be my wife's mother, and said to me: " Benjamin, this place is not for you yet "; so I returned, and my guide brought me back.[1]

This is hell:

> I dreamed that I died and was carried to hell, which appeared to me to be a large place, arched over, containing three apartments with arched doors to go from one apartment to another. I was brought into the first, where I saw nothing but devils and evil spirits, which tormented me in such a manner that my tongue or pen cannot express. I cried for mercy, but in vain. There appeared to me a light like a star, at a great distance from me; I strove to get to it, but all in vain. Being hurried into the second apartment, the devils put me in a vice and tormented me until my body was all in a gore of blood. I cried again for mercy, but still in vain. I observed that a light followed me, and I heard one say to me: " How good doth this light appear to you? " I was soon hurried into the third apartment, where there were scorpions with stings in their tails, fastened in sockets at the end

> thereof; their tails appeared to be about a fathom long, and every time they struck me, their stings, which appeared an inch and a half in length, stuck fast in me, and they roared like thunder. Here I was constrained to cry again for mercy. As fast as I pulled out the sting of one, another struck me. I was hurried through this apartment to a lake that burned with fire; it appeared like a flaming furnace, and the flames dazzled like the sun. The devils were here throwing in the souls of men and women. There appeared two regiments of devils moving through the arches, blowing up the flames; and when they came to the end, one regiment turned to the right and the other to the left, and came around the pit, and the screeches of the damned were beyond the expression of man. When it came to my turn to be thrown in, one devil took me by the head and another by the feet, and with the surprise I awoke and found it a dream. But Oh, what horror seized my guilty breast! I thought I should die and be damned![2]

Abbott soon had other visions, and at length went to Friendship Church, near Salem, N. J., and heard Whitworth. He was so wrought upon that he wept with tears and groans, and began to pray and read the Bible. Later he heard the preacher again, and during his devotions Satan appeared to him and announced gleefully that he was most certainly going to hell and suffer the torments of which he had dreamed. On the way home he passed through a lonely wood and contemplated suicide, but while looking for a suitable place, the Lord appeared in a vision and said: "This torment is nothing compared to hell!" But the Lord soon vanished, and in his place Satan appeared again, whereupon Abbott jumped into his wagon and drove home at top speed, with the Devil in close pursuit. He just did get into the house in time and slam the door, the hot breath of Satan upon him. He records that his dreams that night were appalling, and that the hair rose on his head, while his body was bathed in sweat.

The next day, while at work in a field, Abbott's heart suddenly began to beat with such a clamour that he could hear the strokes, and he threw down his scythe and stood weeping for his sins. He " flew to the end of the field, fell upon his knees, and prayed aloud." That night he went again to the Methodist meeting and heard Whitworth preach, and when he attempted to leave, found that he had lost the use of his legs and was unable to move. He cried in a loud voice: " Save, Lord, or I perish! " and was immediately able to get to his feet. Several hours later Jesus Christ appeared to him in a vision, extending his arms and saying: " I died for you." Abbott immediately awakened his family and read the Bible to them, and next morning went from house to house recounting his experiences. Before nightfall a rumour had spread throughout the neighbourhood that Abbott had gone mad, and all the amateur and professional sorcerers hurried to the Abbott farm. An ordained clergyman tried to drive out the devil which was believed to possess Abbott, and neighbours gave him charms and amulets. He began to fear that their suspicions were well-founded, that the demons which had been pursuing him had obtained control of his soul. That night he knelt in the road and prayed.

" And the Lord said unto me," he wrote: " ' Why do you doubt? Is not Christ all-sufficient? Is not he able? Have you not felt his blood applied? ' I then sprang to my feet and cried out: ' Not all the devils shall make me doubt! ' For I knew that I was converted; at that instant I was filled with unspeakable raptures of joy."

Abbott now abandoned the hard labour of his farm and went from place to place, preaching, performing typically Methodist miracles and practising the popular sorceries of the period. He had great gifts. He continued to have visions and to talk face to face with the Lord; he cast out devils and fought desperate battles with demons and goblins and the lesser fry of the infernal regions. " The devil roared horribly," he wrote, " but was overcome." He pointed his finger at sinners and fixed them with his glittering eyes, and immediately they squawked and fell unconscious, or else had fits; those who retained the power of locomotion fled into the night shrieking for mercy. Occasionally he worked spells of such potency that they proved boomerangs, and himself was knocked unconscious by them. One of these self-inflicted knock-outs kept him flat on the floor for more than half an hour, unable to move, while miserable sinners crawled to him and kissed his hands and feet.

Satan seldom, if ever, prevailed against Abbott's charm. Once a demon entered a common soldier and impelled him to jab the magician with his bayonet, but Abbott stood without flinching and thundered forth hell and damnation. Half a dozen times the soldier lunged, but the power of the Methodist was too great. The point was deflected, and whizzed past Abbott's ear without inflicting injury, until at last an unseen force tore the rifle from the soldier's hands. The miscreant thereupon abandoned his project and fled howling into a field, where he had a fit and lay upon the ground for hours, moaning and groaning. Again, a sinner strode down the aisle of a New Jersey meeting-house bearing a bludgeon, with which he proposed to crack the magician's skull. But Abbott cast a spell, and the sinner dropped his club and threw both hands into the air, crying out: " Do not judge! Do not judge! " He then ran backwards from the house, and continued in this manner until he fell into a ditch, writhing in convulsions. At a meeting on the eastern shore of Maryland Abbott's spells were so potent that the wounded and slain of the Lord lay all over the place, unconscious on the floor or enjoying religious fits. One young girl lay as though dead; her relatives could detect no heartbeat and concluded that she had expired. But Abbott knelt beside her and prayed, and laid his hand upon her head. In a few minutes she awakened and cried: " Let me go to Jesus! " Then she got to her feet and went home, but did not, at this time, go to Jesus.

Once at a meeting in Upper Octarara, N. J., where Abbott was joined by the Rev. James Sterling, the Devil appeared in the revolting form of a Presbyterian, and with great cunning declared that the proceedings of the Methodists were diabolical. Later the Presbyterian attended a meeting in a neighbouring farm-house, and from a front seat watched and sneered while Abbott gave out a hymn and Sterling prayed. Then Abbott began to exhort, and to cast his glittering eyes upon the sinners and point his fingers at them, and all over the house they began to fall unconscious or in fits. But his celestial shot-gun had too much spread; at the very first blast Sterling tottered and fell senseless to the floor. A few minutes later Abbott, the Presbyterian, and two others, sinners of exceptional wickedness, were the only ones standing, Abbott wrote:

> I gave an exhortation, and the two men fell, one as if he had been shot, and then there was every soul down in the house, excepting myself and my old opponent. He began immediately to dispute the point, telling me it was a delusion and the work of Satan. I told him to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. As they came to, they praised God. The next morning Sterling and others were again prostrated in a prayer-meeting.[3]

The Presbyterian now made the mistake of following Abbott to another appointment, not realizing that a demon, even though encased in the body of Presbyterian, was no match for the gifted Methodist. Hardly had Abbott begun to preach when someone cried out in fear. " I looked around," he wrote, " and saw it was from my old opponent. He was trembling like Belshazzar. I told them to let him alone and look to themselves, for it was the power of God that had arrested him. They let him go, and down he fell as one dead." [4]

But even then the Presbyterian was not satisfied. He walked nine miles the next day to Abbott's next meeting, and again fell unconscious under the awful powers of the magician. The devil had now been definitely cast out, and when the Presbyterian arose, he delivered an exhortation. But he did not possess magical powers, and no knock-outs were scored for him.

One of Abbott's most memorable miracles, in which he summoned the thunder and the lightning, was worked on his tour of New Jersey with Sterling. They attended a funeral service conducted by an ordained minister of another sect, and afterward the

Methodists were invited to address the congregation. As Abbott rose to speak, two clouds appeared from different directions and met over the house. Abbott launched into his exhortation, and the Lord obligingly gave a demonstration of the power which the magician could command, producing tremendous claps of thunder and streams of lightning that flashed through the house in an awful manner as Abbott " set before them the awful coming of Christ in all his splendour, with all the armies of heaven, to judge the world and take vengeance on the ungodly." [5]

The lightning flashed and the thunder roared, and so did Abbott. The people shrieked in terror, scrambling about the house on all fours, the shouts of the magician following them wherever they went. He cried that Jesus Christ might come for them on the next thunder clap, and by way of emphasis the heavens opened and torrents of rain poured onto the earth; the whole universe seemed rent asunder by one mighty blast, and the lightning crackled everywhere. The people were crazed with fright; throughout the house they fell unconscious or in convulsions, and many crawled on their hands and knees into the rain-storm and hid in the fields; others ran back-ward, unable to escape the glare of the magician's eyes and the terrible booming of his deep voice.

"The lightning, thunder, and rain," Abbott wrote, " continued for about one hour, in the most awful manner ever known in that country, during which time I continued to set before the people the coming of Christ to judge the world, warning them and inviting them to flee to him." [6]

After another meeting in a New Jersey town one of Abbott's victims could neither eat nor drink for three days; at another a woman lost the use of her legs for the same length of time; at still another a young boy, standing before a blazing fire, was struck by one of the magician's spells and toppled unconscious into the flames. He was immediately rescued, " providentially," wrote Abbott, " for he would have been beyond the reach of mercy; his body would have been burned to death, and what would have become of his soul? " At a Maryland meeting the candles were suddenly snuffed out by an unseen hand, and a weird wind whistled about the meeting-house. The next instant every person in the house was knocked flat, and many of them afterward said that even in the darkness they could see Abbott's eyes glaring at them, and that in each eye was a picture of the cross.

Abbott met Francis Asbury for the first time in February 1781, at the home of Judge Thomas White in Delaware. Asbury sent him to the house of a neighbouring gentleman for lodging, and Abbott began to exhort and flash his glittering eyes the instant his hostess opened the door. She immediately screamed and fell unconscious, and Abbott strode over her body into the living-room, where three other persons were knocked down as he began to sing a hymn, and cast his magical spells. The host, a backslider, escaped, but only for a little while; when Abbott prayed after dinner, he had a fit and then became unconscious. When he recovered, he rejoined the Methodists. Asbury was greatly impressed by these manifestations, and wrote in his Journal:

> I met with and heard Benjamin Abbott; his words came with great power. Over in Chester, he informs me, twenty were renewed in love, and eight on this side; people fall to the ground under him, and sink into a passive state, helpless, stiff, motionless. He tried to attach himself to two other sects, but had such struggles within that he was forced back; the Lord would not let him be anything but a Methodist; such is his account.[7]

Abbott's mysterious powers and his marvellous exploits have always been a source of great awe to Methodist historians and theologians. They compare him to John Bunyan, somewhat to Bunyan's discredit, and unhesitatingly pronounce him divinely inspired. They quote extensively from his writings, although they make little comment on the natural effect of too much religious emotion on such an ignorant, untrained mind. Dr. Abel Stevens, the foremost historian of the Church, devotes more space to Abbott than to any other figure in Methodism except such giants as Wesley, Whitefield, and Asbury, and declares that Abbott's experiences baffle all scientific explanation.

"His visions of the night," wrote Dr. Stevens, "were recorded with unquestionable honesty, and were often verified by the most astonishing coincidences. He was an evangelical Hercules, and wielded the Word as a rude irresistible club rather than as a sword. His whole soul seemed to be pervaded by a certain magnetic power that thrilled his discourses and radiated from his person, drawing, melting, and frequently prostrating the stoutest opposers in his congregation."[8]

This certain magnetic power was unquestionably magical, but it was not potent enough to save Abraham Whitworth. After labouring with Asbury in Baltimore for some time, Whitworth was sent to the Kent circuit, where he fell into intemperance and became a card-player, and suffered a general spiritual collapse. According to Methodist historians, he was expelled from the connexion, joined the British Army, and was killed in battle during the Revolution.

Abbott knew in advance that Whitworth was to become a sinner. "In a dream," he wrote, "I thought I saw the preacher, under whom I was awakened, drunk and playing cards, with his garments all defiled with dirt. When I awoke and found it a dream, I was glad, although I still felt some uneasiness on his account. In about three weeks I heard that the poor, unfortunate preacher had fallen into sundry gross sins and was expelled from the Methodist connexion."[9]

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[1] Abbott: *The Experiences and Gospel Labours of Rev. Benjamin Abbott*, p. 8.
[2] Ibid., p. 7.
[3] Ibid., p. 103.
[4] Ibid., p. 104.
[5] Ibid., p. 119.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 194.
[8] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. I, p. 196.
[9] Abbott: *The Experiences and Gospel Labours*, etc., p. 24.

CHAPTER VI

Thrown to the Romans

I

BLAME for the persecution and perils by which Francis Asbury and the other Methodist preachers in America were beset during the Revolution may justly be ascribed to John Wesley, Thomas Rankin, and Martin Rodda. Asbury's attitude was one of sympathetic neutrality; neither in word nor deed did he do anything against the cause of the colonists, but conducted himself with the utmost circumspection and caution. He regarded himself solely as an emissary of the Lord, put on earth for the express purpose of spreading the Gospel according to the Methodists, and he was determined not to compromise himself with either the Colonial or British governments, or commit any act which might interfere with his tremendous plan for the evangelization of the continent. "My determination is to cast all my cares on the Lord," he wrote, "and bear with patience whatever may occur. May the Lord make me more indifferent toward both persons and things, and only intent on doing his will."

Nevertheless, he was in great danger, and suffered many hardships for more than two years. His lot was not ameliorated until the American authorities came into possession of two letters which he had written to Rankin before the latter fled into the British lines and returned to England. In the first of these he spoke of the eternal dishonour it would be if the Methodist preachers abandoned their flocks; in the second he expressed the belief that the Americans would become a free and independent nation, and declared that he was too much knit in affection to many of them to leave them. While at Warm Sulphur Springs in 1776 he foresaw the success of the colonists and wrote in his Journal: "The English ships have been coasting to and fro, watching for advantage; but what can they expect to accomplish without an army of two or three hundred thousand men? And even then there would be little prospect of their success."

Wesley immeasurably increased the difficulties under which Asbury and the American preachers laboured by his incessant and injudicious meddling in American and British politics. He was not content to devote himself to the spiritual welfare of the thousands in both America and England who revered him as the founder and owner of their religion and trusted him to assure their participation in the sybaritic glories of the Methodist heaven. He began immediately to display traits which have now been woven into the very warp and woof of American Methodism, and which survive in such coercive political organizations as the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals, and similar groups.

As early as 1768 Wesley began interfering in the affairs of the American colonies, publishing in that year a pamphlet entitled *Free Thoughts* on the Present State of Public Affairs. At this time, however, he was opposed to the attitude of the English government, and declared that he could not defend the measures which had been taken with regard to America. Two days after he heard of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, he wrote to Lord North and the Earl of Dartmouth, contending that the Americans were an oppressed people, and that they asked for nothing more than their legal rights.

This letter was written on June 15, 1775. Later in the same year Dr. Samuel Johnson published a pamphlet called *Taxation No Tyranny,* which was a violent diatribe against the Americans. Wesley, reading it, immediately changed his mind and began to abuse the colonists. He did even more. He abridged the pamphlet slightly and issued it under his own name as *A Calm Address to the American Colonies, by the Rev. John Wesley, M. A.,* giving Dr. Johnson no credit whatever.[1] The new edition sold some forty thousand copies in twenty days, and created an immense sensation on both sides of the Atlantic. A bitter controversy ensued, during which Wesley was vigorously attacked by all English friends of the Americans, who issued pamphlets denouncing him. Toplady, long Wesley's bitterest enemy, wrote a tract entitled *An Old Fox Tarred and Feathered,* in which he accused Wesley of plagiarism. Another attack was called *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing,* or An Old Jesuit Unmasked.

Wesley admitted the justice of Toplady's charge by reprinting the *Calm Address,* with a preface acknowledging Dr. Johnson's authorship. But he continued to berate the Americans, and in 1776 brought out a pamphlet called *Some Observations on Liberty,* in which he compared John Hancock to a felon, contended against every proposition by which the colonists supported their cause, and called upon them to lay down their arms.

In America Rankin and Rodda excited the animosity of the colonial government and of the people generally by denouncing them as traitors, by insisting that the Methodists refrain from aiding the cause of the Revolution, and by their open distribution of English propaganda. Captain Thomas Webb also talked against the colonists. Rodda not only circulated the King's proclamation throughout the Kent circuit, in Delaware, but became the supporter and associate of Chauncey Clowe, an apostate Methodist who formed a company of Royalists, numbering about three hundred. This force attempted to fight its way through the American troops to the British lines, but was dispersed after considerable fighting and its leaders were brought to trial. Clowe was executed. The Methodists disowned any connexion with the movement, and Governor Rodney of Delaware found that but two of Clowe's men belonged to Wesleyan societies, but public opinion held the Methodists responsible.

These circumstances created an intolerable situation. Both officials and the people were inclined to look upon all Methodists, and especially Methodist preachers, as Tories, spies, and traitors. They were persecuted throughout the country, and in many districts were thrown into jail, the sole charge against them being membership in Wesleyan societies. Even the eminent Judge White, at whose home Asbury was in seclusion, was arrested and held in prison for several days on a charge of being a Methodist, and Asbury himself fled into a swamp near the White home to escape the American light horse patrol, and after lying there for two days sought refuge at the home of a friendly Methodist, not daring to return to the White mansion for a month. " The Methodist preachers," wrote the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, a noted itinerant, " had almost insupportable difficulties, violent oppositions, bitter persecutions, and grievous sufferings to endure. For a considerable time it was with the utmost difficulty, and at the great risk of personal safety, that they could travel and preach at all. The prejudices of the people ran high, and some of the laws, to meet the exigencies of the times, were hard and oppressive; some of the rulers and civil officers appeared disposed to construe every apparent legal restriction with rigour against the Methodists. Some of the preachers were mulcted or fined, and others were imprisoned, for no other offence than travelling and preaching the Gospel; and others were bound over in bonds, and heavy penalties, and sureties, not to preach in this or that county. Several were arrested and committed to the common county jail; others were personally insulted and badly abused; some were beaten with stripes and blows nigh unto death, and carried their scars down to the grave."[2]

2

Much of the persecution centered in Virginia, North Carolina, Delaware, and Maryland. From the beginning Maryland demanded strict loyalty from everyone within her borders, although she did not accept the Articles of Confederation until 1781. In one county in that state Freeborn Garrettson was sent to jail for preaching Methodism, and in another he was beaten. In Annapolis Jonathan Forrest and William Wrenn were imprisoned, but the latter eventually had the satisfaction of converting the magistrate who had committed him, and the two men who had taken him into custody. In Prince George County Philip Gatch was tarred and feathered by a mob, one of his assailants drawing a paddle of hot tar across his eyeball, inflicting an injury from which he never recovered; and in Queen Anne County Joseph Hartley was bound over in penal bonds of five hundred pounds not to preach, and in Talbot County was imprisoned. Caleb Pedicord, an intimate friend of Asbury and a famous preacher, was beaten so badly in Dorchester County that he was confined to his bed for a long time. In Baltimore Harry Dorsey Gough was arrested for talking Methodism, but was soon released.

Garrettson was menaced by mobs in North Carolina during the first year of his ministry, and saw one of his friends shot for entertaining him. He himself was driven from the state, and went into Maryland, where great popular indignation prevailed against the Methodists because of Rodda's indiscretions. He was accompanied by Joseph Hartley, who was jailed, while Garrettson escaped. But the jailer made the mistake of giving Hartley an outside room, and when curious visitors came to see the caged Methodist, he began to preach to them. He discoursed with such evangelistic fury that great throngs were soon attracted; people came from fifteen to twenty miles round to hear the imprisoned preacher expound the Wesleyan doctrines. The jail yard became the scene of terrific religious excitement; on one occasion Hartley preached to such purpose that his entire audience, as well as the other inmates of the jail, were writhing in fits and convulsions. He began to predict dire evils for those who had imprisoned him, and soon afterward the magistrate who had committed him to jail was seized with a fatal sickness. He immediately ordered Hartley's release and, before he died, told his family that the only safe thing to do was to embrace Methodism. All joined the local society.

Garrettson went from Kent circuit to Judge White's in Delaware, where he visited Asbury for a few weeks, and then rode south into Maryland. In Queen Anne County he was threatened with death, but preached nevertheless, and was attacked by a mob as he rode away from the meeting-house. One of the county's most eminent citizens, formerly a judge, struck him on the head with a bludgeon, and others pulled him from his horse and beat and kicked him. He was stunned and carried into a neighbouring house, where he finally recovered, having been bled by one of the company who carried a lancet. Garrettson wrote later that during the period of unconsciousness the heavens opened and he beheld God and Jesus Christ; the latter, he said, was standing beside the Almighty enumerating the reasons why Garrettson should enter paradise. However, apparently they were not sufficient, for Garrettson did not go to heaven for many years.

The man who had dealt Garrettson the severest blows was by his bed-side when the preacher opened his eyes, and Garrettson immediately began to preach and exhort. The assailant wept when Garrettson sang a hymn and prayed, and finally broke down entirely and said he would take the preacher about the county in his own carriage, and protect him from the mob. However, others cited Garrettson before a magistrate, who loudly shouted that the preacher had been complained of for being a Methodist and therefore violating the laws. He reached for a pen and started to write Garrettson's name, but the latter stepped back a few feet and performed the first of a notable series of miracles.

"Be assured," he cried, levelling his finger at the Magistrate, "that this matter will be brought to light in an awful eternity!"[3]

The magistrate immediately turned white as a sheet, his jaw dropped, and he began to shake. The quiverings centered in his right hand, and the gyrations to which that member was presently subjected shook the pen from his fingers. Under the glittering eyes of the preacher he plucked frantically at it, but he was unable to pick it up, an unseen force twitching his hand with great violence whenever he attempted to do so. And there was none to aid him, for the remainder of the company had with one accord and with one yelp of fright fled the court room as soon as Garrettson began to cast the spell. The magistrate thereupon ordered the itinerant released, and Garrettson did not again find it necessary to prove the power of his magic until he journeyed to Dover, Delaware, in 1778. Hardly had he dismounted from his horse and announced that he was a Methodist preacher come to rescue Dover from sin than a crowd gathered, crying: "He's a Tory!

He is one of Clowe's men! Hang him! Hang him!" The mob milled about him, striking at him and trying to drag him away from his horse, but half a dozen gentlemen forced their way to his side and took him by the hand. The crowd fell back before the aristocrats, and they led Garrettson to the steps of the Dover Academy, where they bade him preach.

Garrettson lifted his voice and thundered hell and damnation with such fury that within a few minutes scores of his hearers were weeping and moaning, and rolling on the ground in religious convulsions. He roared so loudly that most of the town heard him, and business was virtually abandoned while the citizenry rushed to the Academy to find out what the noise was about. One scoffer sitting in a window a quarter of a mile away was struck by the preacher's magic as Garrettson flung out an imploring hand and swept it in a half circle. He immediately had a fit and toppled head first to the ground, and ever afterward was a devout Methodist. More than twenty of the crowd came forward after the service and declared that they were now convinced of the divine inspiration and power of the Wesleyans and that nevermore would they molest a Methodist, while the ringleader of the mob announced loudly that he was going home to read his Bible.

From Dover Garrettson rode into Sussex County, and at Broad Creek found the inhabitants notoriously vicious according to Methodist standards; they were "swearers, fighters, drunkards, horse-racers, gamblers, and dancers." But he saved them, and within a few days had formed a Wesleyan society of more than thirty members. He then journeyed to other parts of the county. Riding along a woodland road in the Cypress Swamp district, he encountered a man who was singing at the top of his voice. Supposing, of course, that the song was a hymn, the preacher stopped to listen. But he soon discovered that it was a popular ditty, and therefore wicked. He permitted the sinner to pass, then spurred his horse until he was alongside.

"Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" he shouted.

The traveller reined in his horse.

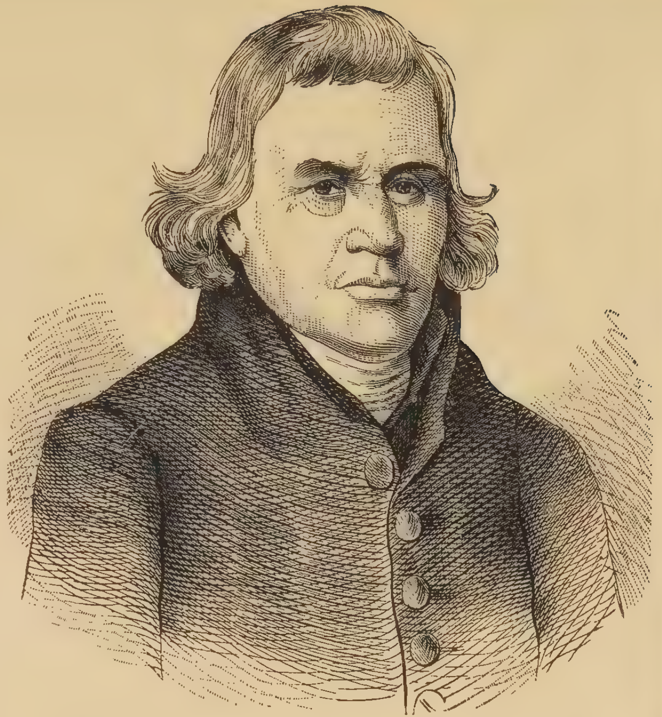
"Sir," he said, politely, "I know not where the gentleman lives."

Shocked, Garrettson repeated the question, but the man said: "I know not the man."[4]

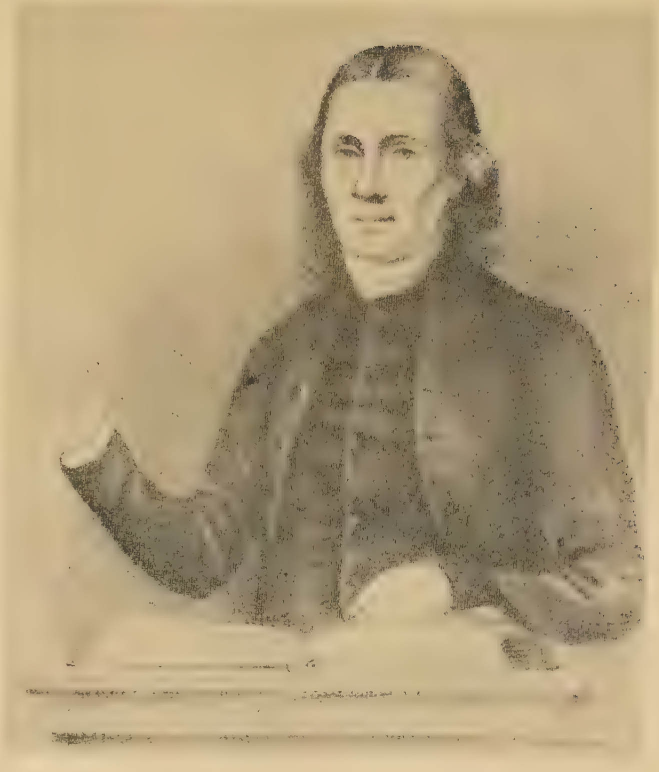
This conversation, recorded almost a hundred and fifty years ago, has come down to the present generation as an irreverent joke which is probably heard oftenest in this form: *Quest.* Did you know Jesus Christ died for you? *Ans.* I didn't even know he was sick.

Encountering and surviving divers persecutions and torments, Garrettson rode southward from Delaware and at length entered North Carolina. Reports that he was headed for Salisbury preceded him, and the night before his arrival a mob burned the house in which he was to lodge, and dragged the owner up and down the street until he was almost killed. When Garrettson entered the town he was immediately attacked by a man who tried to shoot him, but was overpowered by other Methodists. In Lewistown a man noted for his original ideas in persecutions invaded the meeting-house with a drum, which he beat throughout the service. He accompanied himself with yells, and produced a horrible clamour. But Garrettson out-shouted him, and at length the sinner withdrew. The next day he returned with a bell, which he rang loudly, but Garrettson countered with a hymn, and again the tormentor was driven away.

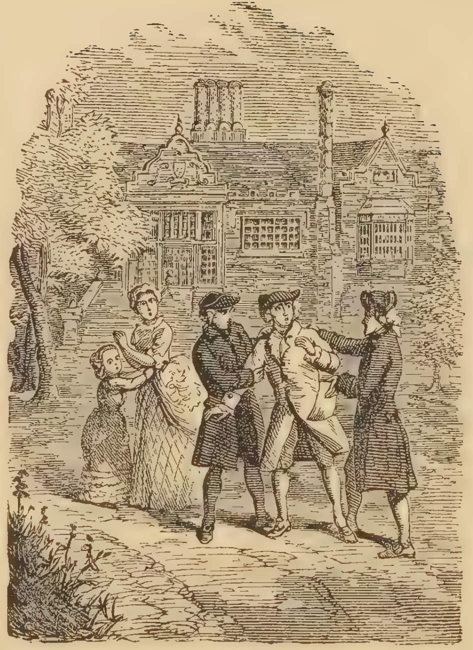
Garrettson now went northward into New Jersey, where he and other Methodist preachers encountered similar persecutions. After preaching in this state for a few months he went again into Maryland, to Dorchester County, and was attacked by a mob which, after beating him, bore him before a magistrate, who ordered him imprisoned. A company was chosen to escort him to jail, but hardly had the procession started when a bolt of lightning came from the sky and frightened them so fearfully that they scattered. Not to be thus cheated, Garrettson continued on toward the lock-up, and after a while his captors overtook him. But they were, as Garrettson wrote, amazingly intimidated, and after riding only a short distance one remarked that it was the part of wis-



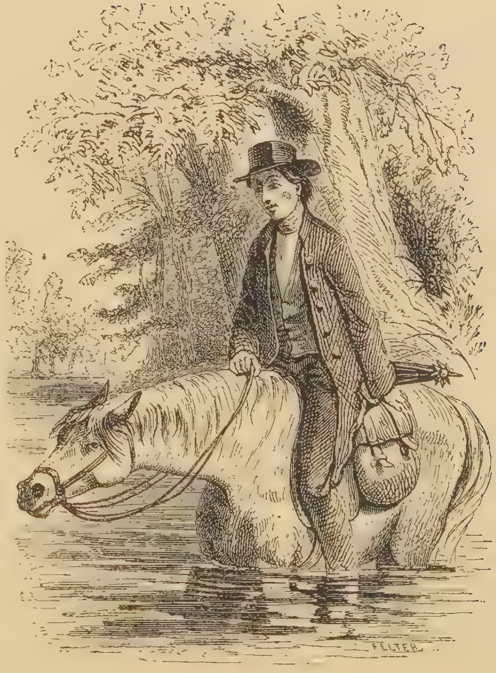
Francis Asbury About the Time he Came to America



Francis Asbury in Middle Life



Arresting a Methodist During the Revolution



A Methodist Circuit-Rider

dom to have nothing more to do with a man who could thus call down the lightning to aid him. They therefore abandoned the preacher, who returned to his lodgings. The next day, however, he was arrested by an old man whose trembling hands bore a huge pistol, which he kept pointed at Garrettson's heart during the ride to the jail. He was then imprisoned, and suffered the keen religious joy of a fortnight's incarceration, " with a dirty floor for my bed, my saddle-bags for my pillow, and two large windows open, with a cold east wind blowing upon me; but I had great consolation in my Lord."

Philip Gatch was frightfully tormented and persecuted while trying to preach on Frederick circuit in Maryland. At one place he was thrown bodily from a house when he started to preach, and at another he was beaten by a mob. Escaping from his tormentors, he rode along the road between Baltimore and Bladensburg. About midway between the two cities he was met by the mob which tarred and feathered him. Later another mob conspired to waylay and murder him, but Gatch heard of it and took another route. He went into Virginia and laboured on Sussex circuit, and was again persecuted. While he was riding to an appointment, two men came up behind him, seized his two arms, and twisted them with such violence that his shoulders were dislocated. The beatings he had received affected his lungs, and after another year he was compelled to retire from the itinerancy, locating in Powhatan County, Virginia, where he continued to serve as a local preacher.

3

The history of every other Methodist preacher on the continent during the Revolution is a record of persecutions and sufferings similar to those experienced by Gatch, Pedicord, Hartley, and Garrettson. These troubles also interfered with the construction of new chapels and meeting-houses, and the fighting between British and American troops, as well as the occupancy of some of the principal cities by the English, prevented the Methodists from using the buildings they had already erected or purchased. In New York the John Street church was left in the hands of the Methodists, but was given over to the Hessians once a week for their own religious services, and, while the church had large congregations and larger collections, the English troops caused the Wesleyans much annoyance by standing in the aisles in groups and sneering at the preachers. In Philadelphia St. George's was used by the English as a riding academy, but the influence of Wesley was so great that the English authorities took the church on La Grange Place away from the Baptists and gave it to the Methodists. In other cities Methodist chapels were occupied by troops, or used as stables.

But notwithstanding all discouragement, Methodism prospered amazingly during the Revolution. In some districts the itinerants succeeded in conducting revivals throughout the whole period of the war, and many laymen joined the ministry; the number of members, preachers, and circuits was increased in a larger proportion than that of any other denomination. In 1776 the Methodists were equal in numbers to the Lutherans, the German Reformed Church, the Reformed Dutch Church, the Associate Church, the Moravians, or the Roman Catholics. At the close of the Revolution Methodism had more than quadrupled its ministry and its members, and ranked fourth among the dozen recognized Christian sects of America.

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[1] Buckley: *History of Methodism in U. S.;* Vol. I, p. 197.

[2] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. I, p. 278.

[3] Ibid., p. 359.

[4] Ibid., p. 364.

CHAPTER VII

The Sacramental Controversy

I

FRANCIS ASBURY remained in the Delaware home of Judge White for about twenty months, but he was not idle. He studied Greek, Latin, and Hebrew; he read two hundred pages of sermonic and other religious literature each day, besides huge sections of the Bible; he prayed seven or eight times daily, preached morning and evening to the members of the White family, and within a month began to hold public services in Judge White's barn. It was in this structure, later, that he organized and set in motion the train of events which restored to him the absolute control of the Methodist organization and definitely established him as the leading ecclesiastical figure of the continent.

Six months after his arrival in Delaware Asbury began to travel a nine-day circuit based on Judge White's barn, and within a year he was circulating freely throughout the state, under the protection of its leading citizens. During this period he had become the friend of Governor Rodney, of the "pious Judge Barratt," and of Judge Richard Bassett of Dover, who was a Governor of Delaware, a United States Senator, a member of the convention which framed the Constitution, and a Judge of the United States Circuit Court. He also met the Rev. Dr. Magaw of Dover, an Episcopal rector who, like Jarratt of Virginia, was an evangelical zealot and looked with favour upon Methodist doctrine. Later Dr. Magaw became rector of St. Paul's Church in Philadelphia. At Asbury's request Judge Barratt and Judge White erected chapels, the former to become famous as the meeting-place of Dr. Thomas Coke and Asbury.

During his retirement in Delaware Asbury added about 1,800 members to the Delaware societies. The conference of 1778 was held in Leesburg, Virginia, but he did not attend; it was impossible for him to cross Maryland. The presiding officer was William Watters, whose name had headed the governing committee appointed the previous year to rule the Methodist societies after the departure of Thomas Rankin. The Deer Creek conference, the last over which Rankin presided, had failed to take definite measures to settle the sacramental controversy, and at the suggestion of Asbury the whole matter had been deferred for one year. At Leesburg the situation was even more uncertain, and the future prosperity of the Methodist organizations a matter of grave doubt, and Watters finally succeeded in inducing the conference to again postpone action for a year, referring the whole question to the conference for 1779, to be held in Fluvanna County, Virginia. This was a decision vitally affecting the life of the Wesleyan societies, but of perhaps equal interest was the admission on trial of James O'Kelley, who was to become Asbury's principal enemy and the leader of the first serious schism in American Methodism.

The fact that circumstances had confined Asbury's activities to Delaware had lowered his status to that of a local preacher, and the Leesburg minutes make no mention of his name, nor does he appear on the list of appointments. Nevertheless he dominated the conference, and later developments make it apparent that the preachers did exactly as he wished, although there is some doubt whether all of them knew it. He acquired this control through William Watters, always his firm friend and supporter, and through Freeborn Garrettson and other preachers of the northern circuits who attended the meeting and looked after his interests, and carried out his commands. Garrettson had laboured on the Delaware circuit in 1777 and 1778, and had divided the work with Asbury, and in all matters deferred to him as though he were the superior by appointment.

Indeed, by the time the Leesburg conference began Asbury had become almost a divine figure among the northern Methodists. They had been tremendously impressed by his refusal to return to England with Rankin and others of his countrymen, and his constant quest for holiness, his pity and his habits of asceticism, his sufferings and his zeal for the Methodist God, had caused many to believe that " to him had been committed the book of the law and the leadership of the hosts to be." He succeeded in winning all of the northern itinerants away from the idea of separating from John Wesley and themselves administering the sacraments, and his ascendency over the preachers, except those in North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland, with whom he was only loosely in touch, was complete. Every northern preacher who attended the Leesburg conference was an avowed admirer of Asbury and a supporter of whatever position he cared to assume. And he had many adherents among the southerners also, the chief, of course, being Watters.

But although he had won a victory at Leesburg, Asbury recognized that it was only temporary. He knew the controversy would be revived at the Fluvanna conference, for the demand for the sacraments throughout the South had reached almost the proportions of hysteria; the vast majority of Methodists were firmly convinced that they would certainly go to hell if they were not enabled to drink the blood of Jesus, and that their children would be for ever lost, with no hope of a successful appeal to the Almighty, if they were not properly and quickly baptized. In many sections it was not possible to obtain the sacraments from the Establishment, for most of the clergy of the Church of England had left the country, and their congregations were disorganized or entirely dissipated.

With this situation confronting him, Asbury decided to take drastic action to control the frantic Methodists. The Fluvanna conference was scheduled for May 18, 1779, in the Broken-Back Church at Manikintown, Virginia. So on April 28 Asbury held a conference of his own in Judge White's barn. It was attended by seventeen preachers of the northern circuits, and by William Watters, who rode north from Virginia to join Asbury, and so cut himself off from the brethren in the South. Methodist historians generally have evaded a discussion of Asbury's private conference, perhaps because it betrays him as human with a strain of practicability; most of them refer to it briefly as a mere casual meeting held because he was not able to attend the gathering at Fluvanna. But Asbury himself says frankly that he held the conference to prepare the northern preachers for the regular session in the South, which is exactly the reason political bosses hold caucuses of their delegates on the eve of nominating conventions. He prepared the northern preachers so thoroughly that only two or three of them attended the Fluvanna conference, and it is to be suspected that they were there only as observers.

The Delaware conference was a very important gathering, for it was Asbury's first open move to regain control of the Methodist organization and reassume the place of which Rankin had deprived him. It proceeded exactly as though it was the regular meeting of the Methodist preachers, stationing the itinerants, conducting all business ordinarily transacted, and voting against the sacraments by adopting a minute against separation from the Established Church, either directly or indirectly. But the questions in which Asbury's intentions are plainly seen, and in which he served notice that he was again prepared to assume control, are the twelfth and thirteenth in the minutes of the conference:

> *Question 12.* Ought not Brother Asbury act as general assistant in America?
>
> *Answer.* He ought; first, on account of his age [he was 33]; second, because originally appointed by Mr. Wesley; third, being joined with Messrs. Rankin and Shadford by express order from Mr. Wesley.
>
> *Question 13.* How far shall his power extend?
>
> *Answer.* On hearing every preacher for and against what is in debate, the right of determination shall rest with him, according to the Minutes.[1]

Watters completed his withdrawal from the Virginia and Maryland preachers by accepting an appointment to Baltimore and definitely throwing in his lot with Asbury. At the conclusion of the conference Asbury wrote a " soft, healing epistle " to the southern itinerants, begging them to again defer action on the sacraments, and a few days later sent letters to John Dickins, Philip Gatch, Edward Dromgoole and William Glendenning, urging them to prevent a separation and inviting them to conform to the decisions of the northern conference. "I entertain great hope that the breach will be healed," he wrote in his Journal. "If not, the consequences may be bad. I am now reading Edwards' *On the Affections*." He was now in a good position; he had been proclaimed general assistant by almost half the Methodist preachers, and was assured of their support in the controversy with the southern faction, but he acted cautiously and did not attempt to force the issue until 1780.

The Fluvanna conference was held as planned. Despite the war extensive revivals had occurred, and the statistics showed a total Methodist membership of 8,577, an increase of about 2,482 over the preceding year. These returns did not include New York, which had been omitted as a station by the Leesburg conference because the city was in the hands of the English. It did not become known until several years later that throughout the period of British occupation the New York Methodists had been served by Samuel Spraggs and John Mann, English itinerants who had started for Europe with George Shadford, but had stopped in New York when they learned of the plight of the Wesleyan society there.

2

William Watters attended the meeting at Fluvanna, and under instructions from Asbury attempted to prevent the southern itinerants from forming any plan for administering the sacraments, imploring them to again defer the matter for another year. There was much discussion and considerable acrimony, which many felt was unseemly among preachers of the Word, but Watters could not prevail. The conference appointed a committee, consisting of Philip Gatch, Reuben Ellis, James Foster and LeRoy Cole, and constituted it a presbytery, with power to administer the ordinances, and to convey a like authority, by the laying on of hands, upon other preachers of sufficient godliness.

By this action the Methodist societies were erected into a Presbyterian church, and had it not been for the political genius of Francis Asbury and the unwavering loyalty with which the northern preachers followed him, the episcopal organization might never have been effected. However, this aspect of the matter does not appear to have occurred either to the southern itinerants or to the people. The news of the establishment of the presbytery was received gladly; throughout Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina there was great rejoicing when the word spread that the faithful could now be baptized and enjoy the emotional and spiritual cannibalism of the Lord's Supper. The preachers, invested with all the authority possessed by ministers of regular churches, hastened into their circuits, and for almost a year Virginia and Maryland were aflame with revivals, the societies in these sections showing phenomenal increases in membership.

One of the leading spirits of the Fluvanna meeting and a noted preacher of the period was Philip Cox, who had become a Methodist in 1774 and had begun to travel under Martin Rodda in 1777. He had the distinction of calling into the Methodist itinerancy William McKendree and Enoch George, both of whom became bishops. Cox was a small man, weighing less than a hundred pounds, but what he lacked in size and weight he made up in fiery zeal and magical powers; his miracles of conversion were almost as remarkable as those of the Rev. Benjamin Abbott. His greatest work was done on Sussex circuit, in Virginia, where he conducted one of the most successful revivals in Methodist history, its successes, of course, being measured by its excesses. On one occasion he preached sitting on a table, because of an injury to his leg, to more than a hundred persons, half of whom were members of the Methodist society. Before he had concluded the other fifty were grovelling in the dirt in the throes of conversion. The next day he preached again, and sixty went down under his powerful magic.

The news of the action taken at Fluvanna was received by Asbury with equanimity; his attitude was that of the political leader who permits a provoking interloper to gain a temporary advantage while he matures his plans for eventual and absolute control. "I received the minutes of the Virginia conference," he wrote, "by which I learn the preachers there have been effecting a lame separation from the Episcopal Church, that will last about one year. I pity them; that Satan has a desire to have us, that he may sift us like wheat." [2] A few months later he wrote: "Our zealous dissenting brethren are for turning out of the society all who will not submit to their administration. I expect to turn out shortly among them, and fear a separation will be unavoidable; I am determined, if we cannot save all, to save a part." [3]

He now applied himself to his Delaware circuit with great diligence, roaming the length and breadth of the state, preaching and praying, meeting the societies, tightening the organization of the classes, conducting revivals and quarterly meetings, and licensing local preachers and exhorters. He varied this program by writing many letters to the southern itinerants protesting against their course regarding the sacraments, and by a vast deal of reading. He had already read the Bible through while in seclusion at Judge White's; he now began it again, and read also in Wesley's and Whitefield's *Sermons,* Fletcher's *Checks,* and many other books. "I have read through the book of Genesis," he wrote in November, "and again have read the *Confession of Faith,* the *Assembly's Catechism, Directory of Church Government* and *Forms for the Public Worship;* now I understand it better than I like it. I purpose to rise at four o'clock as often as I can, and spend two hours in prayer and meditation, two hours in reading, and one in recreation and conversation; in the evening to take my room at eight, pray and meditate an hour, and go to bed at nine o'clock." He also began now to offer evening as well as morning prayers for each Methodist preacher by name. It is to be suspected that he prayed with especial vehemence for the misguided brethren of the South, and eventually, as we shall see, the Lord heard and answered him; at any rate, Asbury won.

The northern conference had adjourned to meet in Baltimore on April 25, 1780, and safe-guarded by a passport signed by the Governor of Delaware, to whom he had applied for citizenship papers, Asbury crossed the state line for the first time in almost two years. However, in Maryland he was a non-juror and could not preach, although no effort was made to arrest him or prevent him presiding over the conference. As he had expected, the southern faction sent messengers empowered to make and receive terms. "We at first concluded to renounce them," Asbury wrote, "and then I offered conditions of union: 1. That they should ordain no more. 2. That they should come no farther than Hanover circuit. 3. We should have our delegates in their conference. 4. That they should not presume to administer the sacraments where there is a decent Episcopal minister. 5. To have a union conference."

These conditions were too stringent, and the southern delegation, headed by Philip Gatch and Reuben Ellis, refused to accept them. Asbury then suggested that the administration of the ordinances be suspended for one year, "and so cancel all our grievances and be one." He promised meanwhile to write to John Wesley and acquaint him with the situation. The northern preachers unanimously approved this suggestion, and Gatch and Ellis were favourably inclined; they departed immediately to put the proposition before the southern conference, which was to meet at Manikintown, Virginia, on May 9. Asbury then proceeded to put his program through the northern conference, which renewed its pledge of loyalty to him, ordered all travelling preachers to be licensed by Asbury as general assistant, and every local preacher and exhorter to obtain written authority from him every four months. Asbury, Garrettson, and Watters were appointed as a commission to attend the Virginia conference and treat with the southerners, who were warned that they would not be looked upon as Methodists until they returned to the fold.

The commissioners left Baltimore on May 9 and rode southward into Virginia. They went first to a house some fifteen miles from Manikintown, where many of the southern preachers had gathered, and began to canvass the itinerants and learn their views regarding the sacraments. Asbury records that he found them of one mind, and the people much pleased with the ordinances; he despaired of being able to control the Manikintown conference and compel the preachers to agree to his compromise. However, he succeeded in convincing Edward Dromgoole, who had great influence, of the righteousness of his cause, and when the commissioners went to attend the conference Dromgoole went with them and openly aligned himself on Asbury's side. "I was permitted to speak," wrote Asbury. "I read Mr. Wesley's thoughts against a separation; showed my private letters of instruction from Mr. Wesley; set before them the sentiments of the Delaware and Baltimore conferences; read our epistles, and read my letter to Brother Gatch, and [John] Dickins's letter in answer. After some time spent this way it was proposed to me, if I would get the circuits supplied, they would desist; but that I could not do. We went to preaching; I spoke on Ruth ii.4, and spoke as though nothing had been the matter among the preachers or people; and we were greatly pleased and comforted; there was some moving among the people. In the afternoon we met; the preachers appeared to me to be farther off; there had been, I thought, some talking out of doors. When we — Asbury, Garrettson, Watters, and Dromgoole — could not come to a conclusion with them, we withdrew, and left them to deliberate on the conditions I offered, which was to suspend the measures they had taken for one year. After an hour's conference we were called to receive their answer, which was, they could not submit to the terms of union. I then prepared to leave the house, to go to a near neighbour's to lodge, under the heaviest cloud I ever felt in America. Oh, what I felt! — nor I alone, but the agents on both sides!" [4]

Asbury repaired immediately to the house where he was to lodge, and prayed most of the night. Garrettson, Watters, and Dromgoole attended to the more practical aspects of the matter, and circulated among the preachers, trying by argument and persuasion to induce them to agree to Asbury's terms. Dromgoole was especially efficient in this electioneering. Asbury arose early and renewed his supplications to the Almighty, while Garrettson and Watters went into a vacant room above the meeting-place of the conference, and for several hours prayed loudly and vehemently. Their voices were plainly audible to the southern itinerants deliberating below, and their calm assumption that the Lord was on their side was somewhat disturbing. Meanwhile Dromgoole had taken his seat as a regular member of the conference, and was bringing all possible pressure to bear on the preachers. This combination of prayer and practical politics was too much for the sacramental faction; the question was finally brought to a vote, and on the suggestion of one of their own number the conference agreed to suspend the ordinances for one year and do whatever else might, in Asbury's judgment, bring peace and union. "I found they were brought to an agreement," Asbury writes, "while I had been praying, as with a broken heart, in the house where we went to lodge at; and Brothers Watters and Garrettson had been praying upstairs where the conference sat. Surely the hand of God has been greatly seen in all this."[5]

Dromgoole now proposed that the northern commissioners be given seats in the conference as legal members, and immediately thereafter an indefinite minute was hurried through recognizing Asbury as general assistant, and binding the southern itinerants to recognize his authority. Asbury then assumed the chair, stationed the preachers and controlled the transaction of all business regularly before the conference. His victory was complete, but he did not try to push the southerners too far; he submitted to a tentative recognition of himself, but, just before the conference closed, brought about the adoption of another minute which requested him to take general oversight of the work in the South as well as in the North. He was also pledged to communicate at once with John Wesley and ask his advice and assistance in the matter of the sacraments. But he did not do so until the following September.

3

Asbury was now bishop in fact if not in title or by consecration, and was in absolute control of the American Methodist organization. To consolidate his position and quiet the few turbulent and refractory elements which remained he started on a tour of the South. He was very ill, with an ulcerated throat, and rheumatism in his legs and arms, which caused him great pain, but nevertheless during the next six months he travelled more than three thousand miles, preaching two or three times daily and covering all of Delaware and Maryland and most of Virginia and North Carolina. He carried the word of the Methodist God into the mountains and the backwoods settlements, where life was rough and there was still great danger from the Indians. The uncouthness and wickedness of the people distressed him greatly, and for their especial benefit he increased the number of his daily prayers to twelve. " I dwell as among briers, thorns, and scorpions," he wrote after preaching along the Haw River. " The people are poor, and cruel one to another; some families are ready to starve for want of bread, while others have corn and rye distilled into poisonous whisky, and a Baptist preacher has been guilty of the same; but it is no wonder that those who have no compassion for the non-elect souls of people should have none for their bodies. These are poor Christians." He suffered great hardships on this tour; much of the time he did not have enough to eat, his sleeping accommodations were of the poorest, and the rains caused him to suffer greatly from his rheumatism. Once on Tar River his legs were so inflamed and swollen that he could not mount his horse, but he had his people lift him into the saddle and tie him there. He then rode in great pain until he came to a settlement, where he was lifted down, and preached and prayed, supported in the arms of two men. On this tour he spent three guineas and two half johannes, of a total value of less than twelve dollars, which had been given to him by Harry Gough of Perry Hall when he left Baltimore.

The most depressing period of the Revolution was now at hand, and much of the South was overrun by the British armies. Cornwallis was in control of South Carolina and was marching north toward Camden, where he was to defeat the American Army under General Gates. Regiments of American troops were moving forward, and engagements were daily reported in Virginia and other sections of the South. Asbury frequently came in contact with detachments of British and American soldiers, but generally they did not molest him, and he paid little attention to them, and referred to them but briefly in his Journal. He rode with his head bowed and his lips moving in prayer, or with his nose buried in the Bible, heedless of what went on either to the right or to the left; he was concerned only with the salvation of souls according to the Methodist formula and the search for holiness for himself. Once he rode calmly between British and American outposts which were engaged in desultory firing across a highway, and not until later did he know that bullets had whistled about him and that he had been in danger. Again, a bullet pierced his hat, but he knew nothing of it until he saw the hole next day.

In November he came again into Delaware, lodging at Judge White's and constantly travelling back and forth, preaching, praying, reading, and studying. He found some friction among the preachers because of the exchanges in stations prescribed by the quarterly meetings, but he soon settled all troubles and there was harmony throughout the land, at least in Methodist circles, although in the South William Glendenning and James O'Kelley had already begun to seethe with indignation at Asbury's greatly increased power. Rumours of this reached him, and he decided to continue his plan of two conferences, one of the northern preachers to precede the regular gathering scheduled for Baltimore on April 24, 1781. Action taken at the first conference, which would be attended by no preachers who opposed Asbury, could very likely be forced upon the regular gathering, and one could be used as a check on the other.

Accordingly he held a conference on April 16 at Choptank, near Judge White's, in Delaware. His leadership was confirmed, and to forestall question of the legality of the meeting the conference adopted a minute calling attention to the fact that Wesley generally held a conference in Ireland preliminary to the general conference in England. No trouble developed at the Baltimore session, thirty-nine preachers agreeing to " preach the old Methodist doctrine, and strictly enforce the discipline as contained in the *Notes, Minutes* and *Sermons* published by Mr. Wesley, so far as they respect both preachers and people." Asbury succeeding in avoiding trouble over the sacraments by notifying the conference that he had written to Wesley as instructed and shortly expected a reply; the conference adopted a minute putting the matter over for another year, and expressing its determination to " discountenance a separation among either preachers or people." Asbury made no effort to induce this gathering to endorse again his assumption of the powers of general assistant; the preachers were still fidgety and their temper was uncertain, and he judged it best not to attempt anything that might lead to revolt.

The statistical returns again showed that the war, and the uncertainties of life in the America of the period, had been of great advantage to the Methodists, for there was an increase of 2,035 members for a total of 10,539. These were scattered in twenty-five circuits and served by fifty-five travelling preachers, including Asbury. At this conference also the question of desertions from the preaching ranks was considerably discussed. Many of the itinerants began with fiery zeal and a firm conviction that the Methodist God was God, but after a few months of hard work they concluded that they might be mistaken, and many of them retired or obtained ordination in the Episcopal Church, then as now a haven for distressed and wearied Methodist preachers.

This conference was a critical one for Asbury, but its results showed that he had completely won over the preachers and the majority of the people, and he felt secure. He now looked about for more work to do, not counting himself sufficiently engaged with his travels, his reading, his daily sermons and prayers, the necessity of doctoring his ailments, and his thousand letters a year. He started a history of the Methodists, and began to compile a hymn-book for the preachers and the societies. While these tasks were in hand, he resumed his travels, and went through Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and North Carolina, and then north to Philadelphia for his first visit there since the British evacuated the city. He found the people "serious, loving, and lively," and the society "in a better state than they have been in since the British Army was here." A few weeks later he wrote: "The work of God appears still to revive among us; and I trust the society increases in grace as well as numbers. Among too many of the citizens the spirit of politics has, in whole or in part, eaten out the spirit of religion. We have come to a conclusion to print the four volumes of Mr. Wesley's *Sermons*."

The conference of 1782 made Asbury's position impregnable and definitely settled the sacramental controversy. Two sessions were held, the first at Ellis's Chapel in Sussex County, Virginia, on April 17, and the second at Baltimore on May 20. Dr. Stevens says it was now understood among both preachers and laymen that two sessions should be held annually, but that the legislative power should be limited to the oldest or northern body; if anything was determined at the northern conference (the one organized in Delaware by Asbury), the southern gathering was compelled to abide by it. In later years the conferences became so numerous that the legislative function became common to all, and no measure was considered as enacted until it had been considered and adopted at all the sessions of the year.

Asbury proposed to the preachers who met in Virginia that they subscribe to an agreement to cleave to the old plan of administering the ordinances; that is, that the people resort to the Episcopal churches for them. The majority immediately signed, but a few were obdurate, and Asbury adjourned the conference until the next day. He opened this session with a sermon from Philippians ii. 1–5, "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." He wrote that he had "liberty and it pleased God to set it home," and with the exception of one man the signature of all the preachers were then obtained. Armed with this document, Asbury went to the Baltimore conference, and with no difficulty obtained the adoption of the following important minutes:

> *Question 18.* Shall we erase that question proposed in the Deer Creek conference respecting the ordinances?
>
> *Answer.* Undoubtedly we must; it can have no place in our minutes while we stand to our agreement signed in conference; it is therefore disannulled.
>
> *Question 19.* Do the brethren in conference choose Brother Asbury to act according to Mr. Wesley's original appointment, and preside over the American conference and the whole work?
>
> *Answer.* Yes.[6]

Thus was Asbury's triumph complete and the sacramental controversy laid in the grave he had dug for it. He immediately set forth on his travels, and had covered the whole Methodist territory by next May 6, when the conference of 1783 met at Ellis's Chapel and in Baltimore twenty-one days later. Both these sessions were conducted in peace and harmony; the question of the sacraments was not mentioned and there was not even a pretence at a revolt against the general assistant. The most interesting feature of the 1783 gathering was the reappearance of New York in the list of stations for the first time in five years. John Dickins was now sent there to assist Samuel Spraggs.

During the following year William Glendenning became the leader of a small and uninfluential group of preachers who still cherished rancour because of Asbury's victory in the sacramental controversy, and were jealous of his authority. Glendenning attended the conference of 1784, which began at Ellis's Chapel on April 30 and at Baltimore on May 28, with a plan by which he hoped to lay Asbury aside, or at least abridge his power. Unknown to Glendenning, however, Asbury had received a letter from John Wesley which, as Asbury says, "settled the point." The details of Glendenning's plan have never been divulged. Wesley's letter officially renewed Asbury's appointment as general assistant, but did not mention the sacramental controversy, the specific matter on which Asbury had asked his aid and advice, although his sole purpose in writing was to strengthen Asbury's position in America and to check those Methodists who had betrayed a tendency to stray from the Wesleyan fold. It is not unlikely that he wrote another and a private letter, acquainting Asbury with his scheme for an episcopal church in America, for it is inconceivable that Wesley would have evolved such a revolutionary plan without consulting his chief lieutenant in the New World; Asbury was almost as powerful on this continent as Wesley was in England, and had he told the American itinerants to reject the Wesleyan scheme, they probably would have done so.

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[1] Buckley: *History of Methodism in U. S.;* Vol. I, p. 223.
[2] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal,* p. 148.
[3] Ibid., p. 154.
[4] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal,* p. 168.
[5] Ibid., p. 169.
[6] DuBose: *Francis Asbury, a Biographical Study,* p. 109.

CHAPTER VIII

The Father of Prohibition

I

A VAST number of holy men have been given credit for starting the series of miracles that finally brought forth the Eighteenth Amendment, but the real father of prohibition in the United States was Francis Asbury. There was no organized temperance movement when he arrived from England in 1771, and little or no discussion of the subject in pious circles, for the clergymen of the period held to the curious view that the regulation of the liquor traffic was solely a matter for the civil authorities, and that salvation and abstinence did not necessarily go hand in hand. But from the beginning of his American ministry Asbury was the inveterate foe of the rum demon, although he himself occasionally drank ale and light wine "for my health." He was the first preacher on the continent to inaugurate a serious and concerted attack on John Barleycorn, and under his instructions and leadership the Methodists were the first sect to make drinking a matter of concern to the Lord. This primary linking of God and prohibition occurred in 1780, twenty-eight years before the first temperance society was organized at Saratoga, N. Y., and twenty-four years before the birth of Neal Dow, who is generally hailed as the father of the movement because he procured the passage of the Maine law in 1851. At the Baltimore conference of 1780, dominated by Asbury and attended by the preachers of the northern circuits, the following minute was adopted:

> *Question 23.* Do we disapprove of the practice of distilling grain into liquor? Shall we disown our friends who will not renounce the practice?
>
> *Answer.* Yes.[1]

Immediately before and after the Revolution there was much drinking everywhere in the country; it is quite likely that, in proportion to population, almost as much hard liquor was consumed as is now drunk under prohibition. Good whisky was regarded as one of the blessings of God, to be used accordingly; it was considered a preventive of disease, and a necessary adjunct to decent social intercourse. "From my earliest recollection drinking drams, in family and social circles, was considered harmless and allowable socially," wrote Peter Cartwright, a noted western circuit rider. "It was almost universally the custom for preachers, in common with all others, to take drams, and if a man would not have it in his family, his harvest, his house-raisings, his log-rollings, weddings, and so on, he was considered parsimonious and unsociable, and many, even professors of Christianity, would not help a man if he did not have spirits and treat the company. I recollect, at an early age, at a court time in Springfield, Tennessee, to have seen and heard a very popular Baptist preacher, who was evidently intoxicated, drinking the health of the company in what he called the health the Devil drank to a dead hog. I have often seen it carried and used freely at large baptizings, where the ordinance was administered by immersion."[2]

Asbury's first sermon in America is said to have contained a denunciation of whisky, and thereafter he continually preached against it, and made frequent mention in his Journal of the wide-spread evil of drunkenness. "This is the prime curse of the United States," he wrote, "and will be, I fear much, the ruin of all that is excellent in morals and government among them." He implored the Lord to "interpose Thine arm," which the Lord eventually did, employing as His agent, with full powers, first Neal Dow, then Carrie Nation, and finally the Anti-Saloon League. However, much of the divine power has now passed into the hands of the Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals.

By compelling conferences to enact rules against spirituous liquors, by procuring the insertion of a prohibitory section in the first Methodist Discipline, and by insisting upon a literal obedience to the general rule of the Wesleyan societies forbidding drams except in case of illness, Asbury forced the itinerants to aid him in his campaign. But they did not always practise what they preached, and it was many years before the great body of Methodist preachers acquired the holiness, so far as liquor was concerned, that is now so characteristic of them. The local preachers and exhorters were, in particular, a constant thorn in Asbury's side; they continued to distil and drink liquor and to sell drams, ignoring warnings and denunciations. Even threats of eternal damnation, and the prospect of losing their share of the heavenly loot, did not reconcile them to the invasion of their liberty. Asbury finally found it necessary to expel many of them, as well as a large number of lay members, and the itinerants were instructed to examine both with great care at the regular class and society meetings. Cartwright left this account of one such examination which resulted in the expulsion of a local preacher on an East Tennessee circuit:

> In examining the leader of the class I, among many other questions, asked him if he drank drams. He promptly answered me, no, he did not.
>
> "Brother," said I, "why do you not?" He hesitated; but I insisted that he should tell the reason why he did not.
>
> "Well, brother," said he, "if I must tell the reason why I do not drink drams, it is because I think it is wrong to do so."
>
> "That's right, brother," said I; "speak it out; for it is altogether wrong for a Christian; and a class leader should set a better example to the class he leads, and to all others."
>
> When I came to the local preacher, I said: "Brother W., do you drink drams?"
>
> "Yes," said he.
>
> "What is your particular reason for drinking drams?" I asked him.
>
> "Because it makes me feel well," he answered.
>
> "You drink till you feel it, do you?" said I.
>
> "Certainly," said he.
>
> "Well, how much do you drink at a time?"

> He replied, gruffly, that he never measured it.
>
> "Brother, how often do you drink in a day?"
>
> "Just when I feel like it, if I can get it."
>
> "Well, brother, there are complaints that you drink too often and too much; and the Saturday before my next appointment here you must meet a committee of local preachers at ten o'clock, to investigate this matter; therefore prepare yourself for trial."
>
> "Oh!" said he. "If you are for that sort of play, come on; I'll be ready for you."

Cartwright then described the trial:

> I had hard work to get a committee that were not dram-drinkers themselves. The trial came on, the class leader brought evidence that the local preacher had been intoxicated often, and really drunk several times. The committee found him guilty of immoral conduct, and suspended him till the next quarterly meeting; and the quarterly meeting, after hard debate, expelled him. The whole society nearly were present. After his expulsion, and I had read him out, his wife and children and connexions, and one or two friends, rose up and withdrew from the society. . . . From this very day the work of religion broke out in the society and settlement, and before the year closed, I took back the thirteen that withdrew, and about forty more joined the church, and not a dram-drinker in the society; but the poor local preacher who had been expelled, I fear, lived and died a drunkard.[3]

2

The right of the local preacher and exhorter to distil and drink liquor continued to be a matter of great concern to Asbury and the temperance element among the Methodists, but no official rule definitely naming them was enacted until James Axley appeared on the scene as a member of the general conference of 1812. He then introduced a motion that "no stationed or local preacher shall retail spirituous or malt liquors without forfeiting his ministerial character among us." It was defeated, but to satisfy Axley and at the insistence of Asbury this was inserted in the pastoral address: "It is with regret that we have seen the use of ardent spirits, dram-drinking, and so forth, so common among the Methodists. We have endeavoured to suppress the practice by our example; and we really think it not consistent with the character of a Christian to be immersed in the practice of distilling or retailing an article so destructive to the morals of society, and we do most earnestly recommend the annual conferences and our people to join with us in making a firm and constant stand against an evil which has ruined thousands both in time and eternity."[4]

Axley renewed his motion each year, without success until the conference of 1816, the year of Asbury's death. An attempt was then made to amend it by adding: "that every prudent means be used by our annual and quarterly meeting conferences to discourage the distilling or retailing of spirituous liquors among our people, and especially among our preachers." But this was unpopular and was withdrawn, and Axley's original motion passed.

Axley, a Virginian, joined the Methodists in 1802, and became one of the noted hortatory preachers of the South and Middle West. He was fanatical in his opposition to liquor, and is said to have anticipated Carrie Nation by smashing bottles and bar fixtures with a hammer. Asbury employed him as a travelling temperance exhorter, changing his circuits with great frequency and sending him into Indiana, Louisiana, Tennessee, North Carolina, Ohio, and other districts where there was considerable consumption of liquor. He seldom failed to convince the Methodists that they would go to hell if they did not stop drinking, and his discourses became famous. One known as Axley's Temperance Sermon is still cited to ambitious young Methodist preachers as a model pronouncement against liquor, although it is curiously free from invective. This sermon was preached in east Tennessee, where there was a large production of peach brandy. Axley's text was 2 Timothy, iv.14, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works," and part of the discourse offered the first exact knowledge that the world had of the nature of the evil perpetrated against the Apostle Paul:

> Paul was a travelling preacher, and a bishop, or a presiding elder at least; for he travelled extensively and had much to do, not only in regulating the societies, but also in sending the preachers here, there, and yonder. He was zealous, laborious, would not build on another man's foundation, but formed new circuits " where Christ was not named," so that from Jerusalem, and round unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the Gospel of Christ. One new place that he visited was very wicked. . . . Sabbath-breaking, dancing, drinking, quarrelling, fighting, swearing, etc., abounded; but the word of the Lord took effect; there was a powerful stir among the people, and many precious souls were converted. Among the subjects of that work there was a certain noted character, Alexander by name, and a still-maker by trade; also Hymenæus, who was his partner in the business. Paul formed a new society, and appointed Brother Alexander class leader. There was a great change in the place; the people left off their drinking, swearing, fighting, horse-racing, dancing, and all their wicked practices. The stills were worked up into bells and stew-kettles, and thus applied to useful purposes. The settlement was orderly, the meetings were prosperous, and things went well among them for some time.

But eventually there came a backsliding.

> One year they had a pleasant spring; there was no late frost, and the peach crop hit exactly. I do suppose, my brethren, that such a crop of peaches was never known before. The old folks ate all they could eat; the sisters preserved all they could preserve; the children ate all they could eat; the pigs ate all they could eat; and still the limbs of the tree were bending and breaking. One Sunday when the brethren met for worship they gathered round outside the meeting-house, and got to talking about their worldly business — as you know people sometimes do, and it is a mighty bad practice. And one said to another: " Brother, how is the peach crop

with you this year?" "Oh," said he, "you never saw the like; they are rotting on the ground under the trees; I don't know what to do with them." "How would it do," said one, "to still them? The peaches will go to waste, but the brandy will keep; and it is very good in certain cases, if not used to excess." "I should like to know," said a cute brother, "how you could make brandy without stills?" "That's nothing," replied another, "for our class leader, Brother Alexander, is as good a still-maker as need be, and Brother Hymenæus is another, and, rather than see the fruit wasted, no doubt they will make us a few."

The next thing heard on the subject was a hammering in the class leader's shop; and soon the stills in every brother's orchard were smoking, and the liquid poison streaming. When one called on another, the bottle was brought out, with the remark: "I want you to taste my new brandy; I think it is pretty good." The guest after tasting once was urged to repeat, when, smacking his lips, he would say, "Well, it's tolerable; but I wish you would come over and taste mine; I think mine is a little better." So they tasted and tasted until many of them got about half drunk, and I don't know but three-quarters. Then the very devil was raised among them; the society was all in an uproar, and Paul was sent for to come and settle the difficulty. At first it was difficult to find sober, disinterested ones enough to try the guilty; but finally he got his committee formed, and the first one he brought to account was Alexander, who pleaded not guilty. He declared he had not tasted, bought, sold or distilled a drop of brandy. "But," said Paul, "you made the stills; otherwise there would have been no liquor made; and if no liquor, no one would have been intoxicated." So they expelled him first, and then Hymenæus next, and went on for compliment, till the society was relieved of all still-makers, dram sellers and dram-drinkers, and peace was once more restored. Paul says: "holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."[5]

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> One year they had a pleasant spring; there was no late frost, and the peach crop hit exactly. I do suppose, my brethren, that such a crop of peaches was never known before. The old folks ate all they could eat; the sisters preserved all they could preserve; the children ate all they could eat; the pigs ate all they could eat; and still the limbs of the tree were bending and breaking. One Sunday when the brethren met for worship they gathered round outside the meeting-house, and got to talking about their worldly business — as you know people sometimes do, and it is a mighty bad practice. And one said to another: " Brother, how is the peach crop

with you this year?" "Oh," said he, "you never saw the like; they are rotting on the ground under the trees; I don't know what to do with them." "How would it do," said one, "to still them? The peaches will go to waste, but the brandy will keep; and it is very good in certain cases, if not used to excess." "I should like to know," said a cute brother, "how you could make brandy without stills?" "That's nothing," replied another, "for our class leader, Brother Alexander, is as good a still-maker as need be, and Brother Hymenæus is another, and, rather than see the fruit wasted, no doubt they will make us a few."

The next thing heard on the subject was a hammering in the class leader's shop; and soon the stills in every brother's orchard were smoking, and the liquid poison streaming. When one called on another, the bottle was brought out, with the remark: "I want you to taste my new brandy; I think it is pretty good." The guest after tasting once was urged to repeat, when, smacking his lips, he would say, "Well, it's tolerable; but I wish you would come over and taste mine; I think mine is a little better." So they tasted and tasted until many of them got about half drunk, and I don't know but three-quarters. Then the very devil was raised among them; the society was all in an uproar, and Paul was sent for to come and settle the difficulty. At first it was difficult to find sober, disinterested ones enough to try the guilty; but finally he got his committee formed, and the first one he brought to account was Alexander, who pleaded not guilty. He declared he had not tasted, bought, sold or distilled a drop of brandy. "But," said Paul, "you made the stills; otherwise there would have been no liquor made; and if no liquor, no one would have been intoxicated." So they expelled him first, and then Hymenæus next, and went on for compliment, till the society was relieved of all still-makers, dram sellers and dram-drinkers, and peace was once more restored. Paul says: "holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."[5]

Another noted temperance exhorter of the South and Middle West at this time was James B. Finley, a native of North Carolina who entered the Methodist connexion at the age of twenty-eight, after several years of service as a local preacher. Asbury employed him as he did Axley and Cartwright, as a travelling oracle against liquor, and Finley had great success. " Frequently," he wrote in his autobiography, " I would pledge a whole congregation, standing upon their feet, to the temperance cause, and during my rounds I am certain the better portion of the entire community became the friends and advocates of temperance. In one circuit alone at least a thousand had solemnly taken the pledge of total abstinence. This was before temperance societies were heard of in this country." [6] Like Axley, Cartwright, and others, Finley spread the doctrine of prohibition to such effect that in many parts of the South and Middle West any person who refused to drink, for whatever reason, was called a " Methodist fanatic." And also like Axley and Cartwright, he encountered much opposition from the local preachers and exhorters and the lay members of the Methodist societies; he was compelled to expel many, and others withdrew of their own accord because they were not in sympathy with the Asburyan campaign against whisky.

Finley related that on one of his circuits his host, class leader of the local Methodist organization, took him into a room and showed him a ten-gallon keg of whisky which he had bought to treat his neighbours at a barn-raising. "Do you know," demanded Finley, " that God has pronounced a curse against the man who putteth the bottle to his neighbours' lips? " The brother replied angrily that there was no law against distilling and using whisky, and that in this matter he proposed to do as he pleased. Finley left the house, saying that he would " rather lie in the woods than sleep in a Methodist house with a ten-gallon keg of whisky for my room-mate." At his appointment the next day he preached a rousing sermon against liquor, and when he had concluded, the local exhorter advised him thus: " Young man, I advise you to leave the circuit and go home; you are doing more harm than good.

If you can't preach the Gospel and let people's private business alone, they don't want you at all." Finley replied that he was commissioned by the Lord to smash this stronghold of the Devil, and that he would brook no interference from distillers and whisky drinkers in the church.

3

The prohibitory minute enacted in 1780 remained in effect in 1781 and 1782. Nothing was added to it during those years. Asbury's time and thought being devoted almost wholly to the sacramental controversy. But in 1783 it reappeared with a further prohibition against drinking and selling:

> *Question 11.* Shall our friends be permitted to make spirituous liquors, sell and drink them in drams?
> *Answer.* By no means; we think it wrong in its nature and consequences, and desire all our preachers to teach the people by precept and example to put away this evil.[7]

The first Discipline, written by Asbury and Dr. Coke and adopted at the organization conference in 1784, retained this rule, and a further regulation forbidding the Methodist ministers and travelling preachers to drink spirituous liquors "unless it be medicinally." Wesley permitted his preachers to drink ale after preaching, and this permission was expressly given to the American itinerants at this conference by this note:

> After preaching, take a little lemonade, mild ale, or candied orange peel. All spirituous liquors, at that time especially, are deadly poison.[8]

These provisions remained in the Discipline until 1796, when the Conference adopted the following rule, as Section 10 of Chapter II:

> *Of the Sale and Use of Spirituous Liquors.*
>
> *Question.* What directions shall be given concerning the sale and use of spirituous liquors?
> *Answer.* If any member of our society retail or give spirituous liquors, and anything disorderly be transacted under

> his roof on this account, the preacher who has the oversight of the circuit shall proceed against him as in the case of other immoralities; and the person accused shall be cleared, censured, suspended, or excluded, according to his conduct, as on other charges of immorality.[9]

This section was a law of the Church until 1840, when it was "struck out as seeming to sanction the practices for which it made regulation." In their *Notes on the Discipline,* which was prepared at the request of the conference of 1796 and thereafter printed as part of the Discipline, Asbury and Dr. Coke made this comment:

> Far be it from us to wish or endeavour to intrude upon the proper religious or civil liberty of any of our people. But the retailing of spirituous liquors, and giving drams to customers when they call at the stores, are such prevalent customs at present, and are productive of so many evils, that we judge it our indispensable duty to form a regulation against them. The cause of God, which we prefer to every other consideration under heaven, absolutely requires us to step forth with humble boldness in this respect.[10]

Asbury induced many prominent statesmen and politicians to join him in his campaign against liquor, one of his most influential supporters being the celebrated Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and one of the founders of a college of medicine which later became the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Rush was the most eminent physician of his time, and was almost idolized by the people of Philadelphia for his magnificent work during the yellow-fever epidemic of the latter part of the eighteenth century. His testimony against liquor had great weight. He spoke against it throughout the East, and on September 25, 1788, appeared before the Methodist conference in Philadelphia and addressed the preachers on the evil effects of alcohol. The event is thus described by the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper:

> At three o'clock the conference met, and Dr. Rush and Dr. Clarkson met with us in order to give their sentiments

> respecting the effects of spirituous liquors. They bore a great testimony against it, judging that spirituous liquors never did any good, except in a very few cases, but that they were the greatest poison to both body and soul of anything we had in our land. Dr. Rush said he found, by observation, that a great many disorders were principally created by the use of spirits. He further said that he, for some time, had had the care of the mad people, and had discovered that two fifths of them were brought into their madness by the use of spirits. He judges it much the best not to use them at all.[11]

In view of the extent to which the movement started by Asbury has grown, it is interesting to notice that he never admitted, or even discussed, the advisability of political compulsion; on the contrary he advocated teaching " by precept and example," and the rules which he caused to be enacted applied only to Methodists. The section against liquor in the present-day Methodist Discipline makes no mention of the religious and civil liberties of the people, nor is there much of " humble boldness " in the manner in which the Church steps forth to coerce the law-maker. Immediately following the endorsement of the Anti-Saloon League the Discipline formerly said: " We recognize that the Church as an ecclesiastical body may not properly go into partisan politics nor assume to control the franchise of the nation," but this was eliminated by the general conference of 1924, and the present Discipline does not refer to the impropriety of participation in politics.

4

The Baltimore conference of 1780 also saw the inauguration of the anti-slavery movement, which eventually disrupted the Methodist church and divided it into the northern and southern bodies of the present day. The following minutes, the first official pronouncement of the Methodists against slave-holding, were written by Asbury and unanimously adopted:

> *Question 16.* Ought not this conference to require those travelling preachers who hold slaves to give promises to set them free?

Answer. Yes.

Question 17. Does this conference acknowledge that slavery is contrary to the law of God, man, and nature, and hurtful to society; contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion, and doing that which we would not others should do to us and ours? Do we pass our disapprobation on all our friends who keep slaves, and advise their freedom?

Answer. Yes.[12]

Asbury was even more exercised over slavery than over liquor, and preached against slave-holding from the beginning of his labours in the New World; wherever he went, he gave special attention to the spiritual needs of the Negroes, and held special services for them. "O Lord!" he wrote, "banish the infernal spirit of slavery from thy dear Zion!" He was greatly depressed throughout his career by the sight of the blacks, and frequently mentioned in his Journal his sorrow that one man should remain in bondage to another. "My spirit was much grieved," he wrote in South Carolina, "at the conduct of some Methodists who hire out slaves at public places to the highest bidder, to cut, skin, and starve them; I think such members ought to be dealt with; on the side of the oppressors there are law and power, but where are justice and mercy to the poor slaves? What eye will pity, what hand will help, or ear listen to their distresses? I will try if words can be drawn swords, to pierce the hearts of the owners."

Again he wrote, "My mind is much pained. I am brought to conclude that slavery will exist in Virginia perhaps for ages; there is not a sufficient sense of religion nor of liberty to destroy it; Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, in the highest flights of rapturous piety, still maintain and defend it. I judge in after ages it will be so that poor men and free men will not live among slaveholders, but will go to new lands; they only who are concerned in, and are dependent on them will stay in old Virginia."[13] Later he cried: "If the Gospel will tolerate slavery, what will it not authorize!" He was the bitterest and most vigourous opponent of slavery in the America of his time, and the most powerful influence working against it; he prevailed upon many Methodists to free their Negroes.

Slavery was not mentioned by the conferences of 1781 and 1782, but in 1783 Asbury put through this minute:

> *Question 10.* What shall be done with our local preachers who hold slaves contrary to the laws which authorize their freedom in any of the United States?
>
> *Answer.* We will try them another year. In the meantime let every assistant deal faithfully and plainly with every one, and report to the next conference. It may then be necessary to suspend them.[14]

This same question was asked in the preliminary conference of 1784, and it was voted to give the Virginians another year of probation, but to suspend immediately all local preachers in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New Jersey who refused to emancipate their slaves according to their state laws. Travelling preachers were now placed in the same category, and the conference decided to employ no longer those who would not manumit their slaves wherever the law permitted. This does not appear to have been done, but at the Christmas conference in Baltimore, where the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, Asbury procured the insertion in the first Discipline of an elaborate plan for the freedom of all slaves held by Methodists, whether preachers or laymen, and by precept and example the gradual emancipation of all slaves in the nation.

Asbury did not have the unanimous support of his brethren in obtaining the adoption of his anti-slavery section, for many of the southern preachers, including such a notable Methodist as Freeborn Garrettson, had been born and reared in a slave-holding country, themselves owned Negroes, and saw no wrong in it. The Rev. Devereaux Jarratt of Virginia also objected to the action of his friends the Methodists; he owned twenty-four slaves, and considered them necessary to the proper working of his lands. He suggested that the Methodists confine their devotion to white souls, but Asbury assured him that all would be white in the Wesleyan heaven, and that it was his duty to aid as many blacks as possible to attain the celestial glories.

But the rule caused much trouble throughout the South, especially in South Carolina and Virginia. Dr. Coke had an argument about slavery with a Virginia gentleman, and the next day, after James O'Kelley had preached against it, a mob was formed to flog them. Asbury congratulated himself that they "came off with whole bones." In another Virginia town Asbury was met by a crowd which demanded that he cease preaching against slavery. But they could not stop him; he went throughout Virginia and the Carolinas, demanding that the members of the Methodist societies free their Negroes and denouncing the practice of holding slaves. In 1785 he prepared petitions entreating the legislatures and general assemblies of the various states to pass laws against slavery, and gave them to the itinerants to circulate for signatures. This was an important step, for it marked the first Methodist meddling in politics, and was the first attempt of the church to influence legislation; it was the beginning of the practice which has resulted, in our time, in the maintenance of a Methodist lobbying organization in Washington. Asbury himself circulated the petition in Virginia, and with Dr. Coke went to Mount Vernon and asked George Washington to sign it, and to use his influence to free the slaves. This visit was made on May 26, 1785, and Asbury's Journal mentions it but briefly. "We waited on General Washington, who received us very politely, and gave us his opinion against slavery." Dr. Coke, however, went into more detail.

> He received us very politely, and was very open to access. He is quite the plain country gentleman. After dinner we desired a private interview, and opened to him the grand business on which we came, presenting to him our petition for the emancipation of the Negroes, and entreating his signature, if the eminence of his station did not render it inexpedient for him to sign any petition. He informed us that he was of our sentiments, and had signified his thoughts on the subject to most of the great men of the state; that he did not think it proper to sign the petition; but if the Assembly took it into consideration he would signify his sentiments to the Assembly by letter. He asked us to spend the evening and

lodge at his house, but our engagements at Annapolis the next day would not admit of it.[15]

Asbury was too early by many years with his campaign against slavery; for the action of the Methodist conference of 1780 anticipated the emancipation of the slaves in Massachusetts by three years, in Rhode Island and Connecticut by four years, and it was not until seven years later that Congress enacted a law prohibiting slavery in the Northwest Territory. Only six years before, in 1774, the first anti-slavery society was organized in Philadelphia by Dr. Benjamin Rush and James Pemberton. Asbury's movement received little support even in the North, where there was a decided abolitionist feeling among many of the officials and a large proportion of the people. And there was so much opposition in Virginia and the Carolinas that the conference of 1785 was compelled to adopt a rule suspending the execution of the anti-slavery minute " till the deliberations of a future conference." A postscript to this rule said that " we do hold in the deepest abhorrence the practice of slavery, and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means."

There was no further mention of slavery until the conference of 1796, although Asbury continued to preach against it and to circulate his petitions, but in that year he procured the insertion of a section almost similar to that of 1784, but not going into such minute detail. It provided that persons admitted to official stations in the Church should arrange for the gradual emancipation of their slaves, and that a Methodist buying a slave should permit the Negro to work out the price of his freedom, the number of years to be determined by the quarterly meeting of his circuit. In 1800 a new paragraph was inserted instructing each annual conference to draw up petitions and memorials to the state legislatures, similar to the ones circulated by Asbury and the preachers several years before, and present them after obtaining a sufficient number of signatures.

This remained the law of the Church until 1804, when a minute was adopted exempting the Methodists of North Carolina, South

Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee from its operation. Virginia was not included in the exemption, as Asbury had by this time made considerable progress in arousing abolitionist sentiment, and the Church was sufficiently powerful there to continue the fight. But four years later the greater part of the prohibitory section was struck out, and the general conference passed a rule authorizing each annual conference to enact its own regulations relative to buying and selling slaves. This was reiterated in 1812, at which Conference also Asbury introduced and had passed a curious rule providing that " one thousand Forms of Discipline be prepared for the use of the South Carolina conference, in which the section and rule on slavery be left out." In 1820, four years after Asbury's death, the regulation permitting the conferences to form their own anti-slavery laws was rescinded, and the general conference, representing the whole church, began that extensive campaign which finally resulted in the greatest ecclesiastical schism in the history of America.

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[1] Emory: *History of the Discipline*, p. 15.
[2] Cartwright: *The Backwoods Preacher*, etc., p. 119.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. IV, p. 541.
[5] Finley: *Sketches of Western Methodism*, p. 238.
[6] Daniels: *Illustrated History of Methodism*, p. 584.
[7] Emory: *History of the Discipline*, p. 19.
[8] Ibid., p. 54.
[9] Ibid., p. 192.
[10] Ibid., p. 338.
[11] Phoebus: *Beams of Light on Early Methodism*, p. 84.
[12] Emory: *History of the Discipline*, p. 15.
[13] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 367.
[14] Emory: *History of the Discipline*, p. 19.

CHAPTER IX

Upon This Rock

I

MORE than three years before John Wesley wrote to the American societies and reappointed Francis Asbury his general assistant, he asked Bishop Lowth of London to ordain one Methodist preacher as a presbyter of the Church of England. The proprietor of Methodism proposed to send this holy man to America, to travel and administer the sacraments, and still the clamour of the Virginians; from his conversations with Thomas Rankin and his correspondence with Asbury, Wesley knew that the American Methodists would not much longer consent to receive the flesh and blood of Jesus from any but their own preachers, whom they could trust not to serve instead the flesh and blood of Satan. But Bishop Lowth refused, and repeated his refusal when Wesley again implored him early in 1784. Wesley then had no alternative but to carry out the plan which had been in his mind for several months. He decided to himself ordain a superintendent, or bishop, and two presbyters, or elders, and send them to America to co-operate with Asbury and form the American societies into an episcopal church.

Probably no other single act of John Wesley's has aroused so much discussion as this decision; it is still debated, many devout theologians holding that he exceeded his ecclesiastical authority, and usurped churchly powers which he did not possess in his own right. But Wesley himself had no doubt of the correctness of his step, perhaps the most important of its kind since the Reformation. Forty years before the sacramental controversy arose in America, after reading Lord King's *Primitive Church,* he decided that a distinction of office, rather than of order, existed between bishops and presbyters, and that a bishop was nothing more than a presbyter appointed or elected to a governing post. Fifteen years later Bishop Stillingfleet's *Irenicum* convinced Wesley that episcopal ordination, while expedient, was not vitally necessary to salvation, and that the plea of divine right for diocesan episcopacy was unknown in the Primitive Church. Therefore, as a presbyter of the Church of England, he believed that he had as much right to ordain as did Lowth or any other bishop of the Establishment, and that his ordinations would be as valid in the eyes of the Lord. " I firmly believe," he wrote, " I am a scriptural *episcopos* as much as any man in England, for the uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove." [1]

The necessity of a separate church government for the Wesleyan societies in the United States was obvious. Under Asbury's energetic direction Methodism in America had spread rapidly, experiencing a remarkable growth notwithstanding persecutions and the perils and hardships of the Revolution. At the time Wesley made his decision, it comprised eighty-three itinerants, several hundred local preachers and exhorters, and about fifteen thousand members, besides many who heard Methodist preaching without acknowledging the Methodist God. New circuits were constantly being organized, and Methodist missionaries and evangelists were pushing into the outlying districts of the infant Republic, preparing the way for the great revivals which were to keep the country in a continual state of religious excitement for almost twenty years. Asbury was virtually the sole ruling power in American Methodism, and his domain was fast growing so large as to be unwieldy without a proper and efficient governing machinery. Many preachers were jealous of his power, and schismatic rumblings had already begun to be heard; and worst of all the people wailed loudly for baptism and the Lord's Supper, without which they were certain they would go to hell. Although the sacramental controversy had apparently been disposed of by Asbury's genius for compromise and organization, it was becoming increasingly difficult to persuade the Methodists to resort to the clergymen of the Church of England for their cannibalistic exercises; the Revolution had dissolved ecclesiastical as well as civil ties with the mother country, and the people no longer had faith in the godliness of her ministers. Even in Virginia, the centre of its colonial strength, the Establishment was in disrepute; and by adopting, in abridged form, its Articles of Religion, its prayer-book, its liturgy, and its forms of ordination, Methodism became its legitimate successor, as well as the first episcopal church in America.

As his first superintendent, or bishop, John Wesley chose the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., of Jesus College, Oxford, and as elders, or presbyters, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, itinerants of many years' experience on English circuits. Dr. Coke became a minister of the Church of England upon his graduation from Oxford, and was sent to South Petherton parish, Somersetshire, where he heard Thomas Maxfield and other Wesleyan preachers and was converted to Methodism. He began to preach Methodist doctrine, and was expelled from his parish by the ancient ceremony of chiming; he was menaced by mobs as he left his charge amid the tolling of the bells. On the next two Sundays he returned and preached in the street in front of the church, and was protected by his friends when the rabble would have stoned him. But he was finally compelled to leave, and when it was certain he was gone, the bells rang and the mob was treated with hogsheads of cider. Dr. Coke immediately embraced Methodism officially and became one of its greatest figures. He crossed the Atlantic eighteen times, and died on a ship in the Indian Ocean while on a mission to convert the so-called heathen of India, and turn them from the worship of Brahma and Buddha to the glories of Methodism and the beautiful bickerings of Christianity.

Wesley broached his project first to his brother, Charles, and to Fletcher of Madelay, whose interest in American Methodism was so great that while listening to Thomas Rankin's report of the work across the seas, he interrupted six times in one afternoon to kneel in prayer for the Americans, and to thank God for their peculiar susceptibility to Methodist preaching and doctrine.

Fletcher endorsed the scheme with great enthusiasm, but Charles Wesley as vigorously opposed it. He had never lost his High-Church opinions, and accused his brother of leading a schism; he predicted that Dr. Coke would return from the United States inflated with episcopal notions and turn all English Methodists into dissenters. "Alas!" he wrote to John, "what trouble are you preparing for yourself, as well as for me, and for your oldest, truest, best friends! Before you have quite broken down the bridge, stop and consider! If your sons have no regard for you, have some for yourself. Go to your grave in peace; at least suffer me to go first, before this ruin is under your hand."[2]

John Wesley, however, paid little attention to Charles. Encouraged by Fletcher and other Methodist leaders, he proceeded, broaching the matter to Dr. Coke in February 1784. At first Dr. Coke was shocked, and pleaded for time to consider, but eventually he agreed with Wesley that the step was necessary, and that he, being already a presbyter of the Church of England with full power to administer the sacraments and save souls, was beyond question the logical candidate for first Methodist bishop. Wesley then procured the aid of the Rev. James Creighton, a presbyter, and on September 2, 1784, at Bristol, consecrated Dr. Coke as superintendent or bishop of the Methodist societies in America. At the same time he ordained Whatcoat and Vasey as elders or presbyters, and on September 18 the party set sail for the United States. They bore a letter from Wesley to the American Methodists, and abridgments of the prayer-book and liturgy of the Church of England, and of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Establishment. These last Wesley had reduced to twenty-four, omitting the 3rd, 8th, 13th, 15th, 17th, 18th, 20th, 21st, 23rd, 26th, 29th, 33rd, 34th, and 37th, intending thereby to eliminate all traces of ritualism, Calvinism, and Romanism, and make them strictly Arminian in all points. The organization conference in America added an article "Of the Rulers of the United States of America," which is numbered twenty-three in the present Twenty-five Articles which form the basis of Methodist theology. They may be found in any Book of Discipline.

Dr. Coke and his retinue of elders arrived in New York on the third of November and went to the home of Stephen Sands, a trustee of the John Street Church. There they met John Dickins, the stationed Methodist preacher, and unfolded to him the Wesleyan scheme for the future government of the American societies. Dickins had been a leader of the Virginia faction which had caused Asbury so much trouble, and was wildly enthusiastic over the prospect of himself administering the sacraments; he implored Dr. Coke to announce his mission to the public immediately. But Dr. Coke thought it best to make no further disclosures until he had consulted with Asbury. However, intimations of his visit had preceded him across the seas, and Methodists all over the country knew that events of great importance impended, although none knew their nature. Asbury, travelling in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina and enjoying a " blessed season " in saving Methodist souls, heard of Dr. Coke's arrival and started north to meet him.

After two days in New York, during which he preached several times, Dr. Coke went to Philadelphia, where he was entertained by the Governor of Pennsylvania, and preached in St. Paul's and in the Methodist chapel of St. George's. Before the end of the week he had travelled south to Dover, in Delaware, where he was the guest of Judge Bassett, who was now building a Methodist preaching house. There Freeborn Garrettson attached himself to the party, and they pushed southward until they reached Barratt's Chapel, in Kent County, Delaware, where Dr. Coke preached and administered the sacrament to more than five hundred people, many of whom had come fifteen to twenty miles to hear him and to drink Jesus' blood. Francis Asbury rode through the forest during the afternoon, and entered the chapel just in time to witness the sacred ceremony. He had known Richard Whatcoat in England and supposed him to be only a lay preacher, so that he was greatly surprised and shocked to see Whatcoat take the cup in the administration. " However," he wrote, " it may be of God." At the conclusion of the sermon he approached the pulpit and kissed Dr. Coke, who returned the salutation, while a solemn hush fell over the congregation. Then " the whole assembly, as if struck with a shock of heavenly electricity, burst into a flood of tears," [3] and one of the most momentous meetings in the history of Methodism had been accomplished.

Asbury and Dr. Coke lodged that night at the home of Judge Barratt, about a mile from the chapel, and Dr. Coke explained why he had come to America and what he proposed to do under the authority bestowed upon him by John Wesley. Asbury now displayed further evidences of his penchant for practical politics. He professed to be shocked, and at first refused to be ordained and consecrated; his opinions seemed to be almost as High Church as those of Charles Wesley, and he expressed doubt of Wesley's ecclesiastical authority. But Dr. Coke convinced him that his consecration would be scripturally correct, pleasing to the Methodist Lord, and, above all, expedient, and at length he consented. However, he stipulated that he would not act as superintendent and ordain other preachers unless elected to the post by the whole body, or at least a majority, of the itinerants, although Dr. Coke urged him to accept consecration immediately and continue to rule the Methodists in the United States under the letter reappointing him general assistant.

But Asbury knew, as Dr. Coke did not, that the trend of American Methodism was away from John Wesley; the members of the societies in this country were willing to accept and revere Wesley as their father in the Gospel, but they were more and more manifesting an aversion to being under the ecclesiastical thumb of an Englishman three thousand miles away. Asbury foresaw that a Methodist bishop who was merely an appointee of Wesley would meet with considerable opposition, and be hindered and hampered in his work of snaring souls, whereas if the bishop was elected by the preachers themselves, his opponents would have no grounds for popular sympathy. It then developed that on his way north Asbury had formed a council of preachers, all his friends and devoted followers, who had preceded or followed him to Delaware and now awaited his orders. To this council he submitted Wesley's letter and a statement by Dr. Coke, and the preachers decided that a general conference should be held in Baltimore during Christmas week. The call was not signed by Asbury as general assistant, but by a committee of preachers, so that Asbury was not placed in the vulnerable position of having ordered a conference to elect himself bishop. Freeborn Garrettson was chosen to ride north and south, and east and west, notifying the itinerants to assemble in Maryland. Sixty of the eighty-three received the notice, and of those who did not the majority were preachers who had fought Asbury's policies and consistently opposed his rule. Among them was Jesse Lee, the first historian of the Church and for many years one of its notable figures, with whom Asbury had many controversies. Lee knew nothing of the proposed conference until the Methodist Episcopal Church had been organized and both Asbury and Dr. Coke elected superintendents.

Asbury then planned extensive preaching tours for himself and Dr. Coke during the six weeks that remained before the Baltimore gathering, sending the latter on a thousand-mile journey through Maryland and parts of Virginia. The doctor was accompanied by Asbury's Negro travelling companion, Harry Hosier, known through the connexion as "Black Harry." Hosier was small in stature and coal-black, and could neither read nor write; into this ideal receptacle Asbury and other preachers poured the tenets of Methodism, and Hosier became one of the most fanatical religionists of them all. He travelled extensively with Asbury, Dr. Coke, Whatcoat, and Freeborn Garrettson, acting as their servant, and frequently preached; he became celebrated as an orator and was regarded as one of the foremost Methodist preachers of his time. Many congregations preferred him to the white itinerants. He was able to recite long passages from the Bible which Asbury had taught him, and was especially fond of those portions of the Scriptures in which the Hebrew god Yahveh promises sybaritic magnificence to the faithful and threatens horrible punishments to unbelievers. He was converted in the usual Methodist manner, with fits, convulsions, and terrible emotional and mental sufferings, but later wicked people corrupted him with a glass of wine and he became a backslider and a sinner. However, he prayed all night under a tree and again found saving grace, if not sanctification. He died in 1810 and went to heaven.

After Dr. Coke and Black Harry had started on their trip, Asbury, Whatcoat, and Vasey rode from Delaware into the Western Shore of Maryland, where they preached and prayed constantly, visiting all the appointments in that section and arousing great enthusiasm. Asbury observed November 26 as a day of fasting and prayer, "that I might know the will of God," he wrote, "in the matter that is shortly to come before our conference; the preachers and people seem to be much pleased with the projected plan; I myself am led to think it is of the Lord. I am not tickled with the honour to be gained; I see danger in the way. My soul waits upon God. Oh that he may lead us in the way we should go!" At Abingdon he met Dr. Coke again, and there also came William Black, an English preacher who had founded Methodism in Nova Scotia and was on his way to the Baltimore conference to ask American assistance. On December 17 Asbury, Coke, Vasey, and other leaders reached Harry Dorsey Gough's home, Perry Hall, fifteen miles from Baltimore. Whatcoat, delayed by a preaching appointment, arrived the next day. Asbury and Dr. Coke immediately began the revision of the rules and minutes of the English conferences, relieving their work with frequent prayers and religious exercises in Gough's chapel. A week later they rode into Baltimore.

2

The conference which was to give birth to the Methodist Episcopal Church and realize the early dream of Francis Asbury's mother was held in the Lovely Lane Chapel in Baltimore. It began at ten o'clock on the morning of December 24, 1784. Dr. Coke was the presiding officer, but Asbury was the dominating force; almost every preacher present was his friend and follower, beholden to him for many favours, and in effect his personal delegate. Even James O'Kelley, later Asbury's principal enemy in the ranks of the itinerancy and leader of the first important schism, was at this time his warm admirer.

This was the first time that the majority of the American itinerants had seen Dr. Coke, and at first they were not favourably impressed; he was short and slim, with manners of extraordinary courtliness, and his complexion and voice were those of a woman. He experienced considerable embarrassment during his preaching tours in this country because unregenerate persons in his congregations sometimes tittered at his effeminate appearance and the shrillness of his tones. However, he possessed great skill in preaching and prayer, and was a man of the most extreme piety, fanatical in his devotion to John Wesley and the Methodist God. A British officer once characterized him as "the most heavenly-minded little devil I have ever seen."

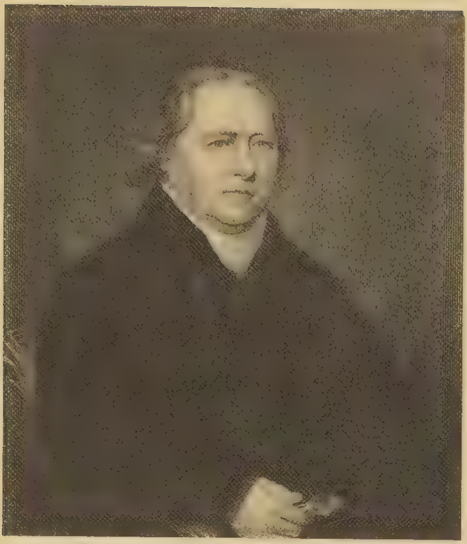
But Dr. Coke had also a genius for being misunderstood and for getting into trouble, and his path in America was not smooth. He and Asbury professed, in their respective Journals, to be very fond of each other, and to transact the business of their joint superintendency "in sweetness and love," but nevertheless they had many clashes on matters of policy, in all of which Asbury was victorious. Many of Dr. Coke's activities were strongly opposed by the American Methodists, and he finally got himself into very hot water by suggesting that the continent be divided equally between himself and Asbury as bishops. Asbury met this attempt to reduce his power by procuring the adoption of a resolution in conference which somewhat tartly suggested that Dr. Coke reside in England until recalled to America by the connexion here, and that he not act as superintendent or bishop until so recalled.

This fixing of Dr. Coke's status caused considerable excitement in British and American Methodism, but an even greater stir was aroused by the publication of a letter which the Doctor had written to Bishop White of the Protestant Episcopal Church, suggesting the union of that body with the Methodists, or, rather, the absorption of the latter. The document was written in April 1791, but Bishop White held it confidential until 1804, when he revealed its contents to Simon Wilmer and John McClaskey of

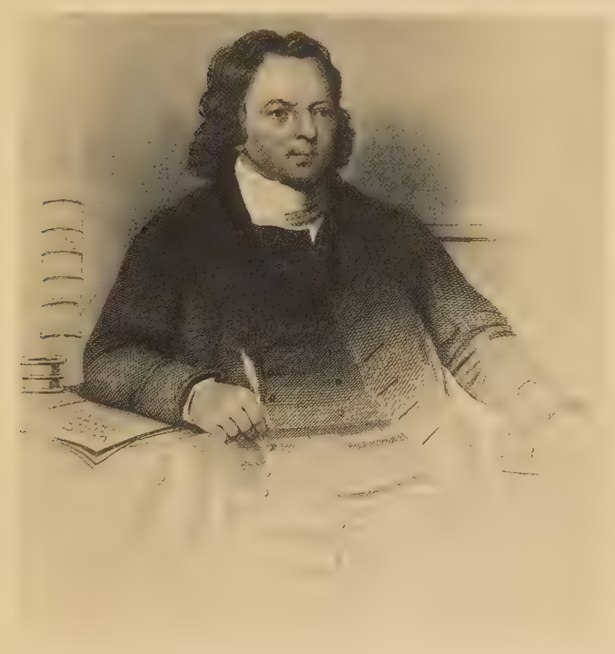
Philadelphia, the latter a Methodist preacher. Later it was published in Maryland during a diocesan controversy. Propositions for the union came before the general convention of the Episcopal Church in 1792, and passed the House of Bishops, but were defeated in the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies.[4] In a letter of explanation to the Methodist conference Dr. Coke said that he had intended to do no more than begin negotiations, and that he had not consulted Francis Asbury about the scheme because Asbury was in the South when it occurred to him. A month later he did lay the plan before Asbury, but could obtain no definite answer, for Asbury viewed the proposal with his customary caution and would not commit himself. " With that caution which peculiarly characterizes him," wrote Dr. Coke, " he gave no decisive opinion on the subject." Eight years later Dr. Coke wrote to the Bishop of London suggesting that the English Methodists unite with the Church of England. His letter was referred to the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, and the latter wrote the Doctor that his scheme was highly improper.

Dr. Coke opened the Baltimore conference with a sermon, and then presented the letter from John Wesley, and made a verbal statement of the intentions of the owner of Methodism. In accordance with Wesley's instructions, " it was agreed," wrote Asbury, " to form ourselves into an Episcopal Church, and to have superintendents, elders, and deacons." Asbury reiterated his refusal to serve unless chosen by the brethren, despite Wesley's appointment, and the conference promptly elected him and Dr. Coke as joint superintendents. The preachers also decided to adopt the liturgy sent to them by Wesley, and to read it in their church-services, and to use the prayer-book that had been abridged from the forms of the Church of England. But in later years both these practices were abandoned, as was also the custom of the bishops, and elders, appearing in gown, cassock, and bands; the people preferred, in prayer, the roaring extempore supplications in which the Lord was asked for something specific, and murmured against the incongruity of a uniformed priesthood preaching the Methodist doctrine of plainness and self-denial.

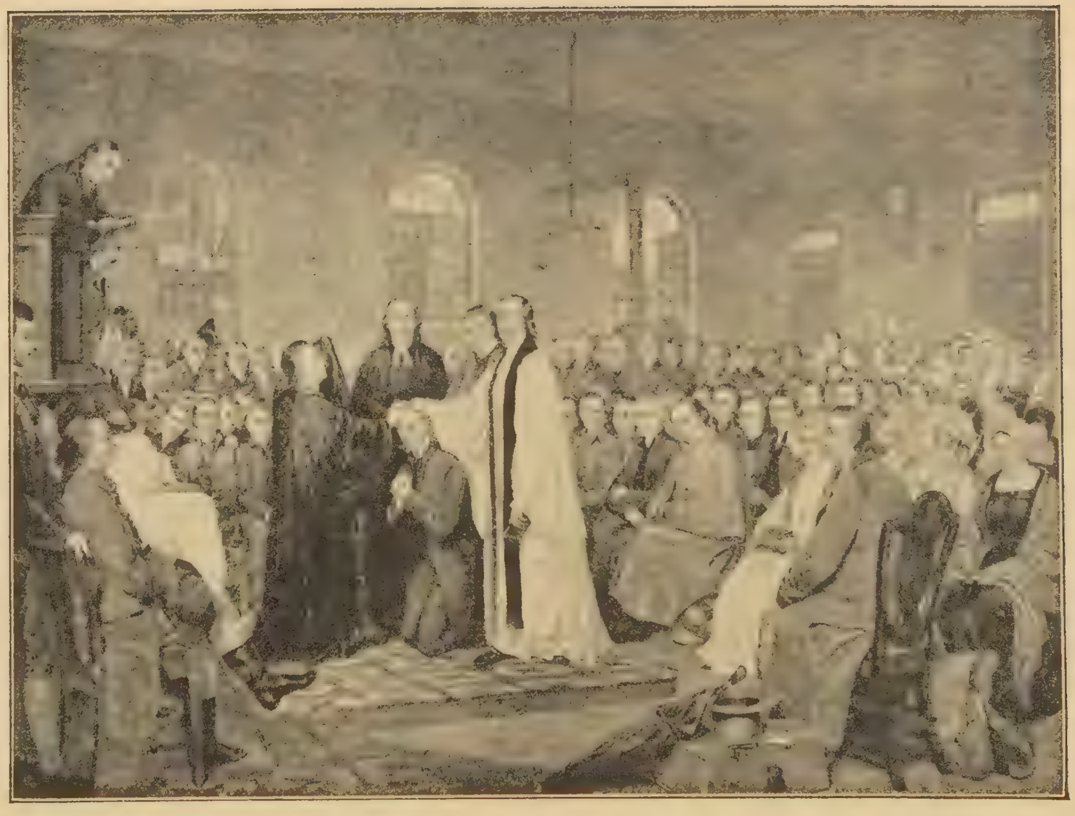
On Christmas-day Asbury was ordained deacon by Dr. Coke,



Freeborn Garrettson



Dr. Thomas Coke



Consecration of Asbury as Bishop

Vasey, and Whatcoat, on the 26th elder, and on the following day he was consecrated bishop, or superintendent, the Rev. Philip William Otterbein assisting in the ceremony at Asbury's request. The conference also chose seventeen of its members, all but one or two of them supporters of Asbury, to be elders and deacons. Freeborn Garrettson and James O. Cromwell were ordained elders for Nova Scotia, in response to the request of William Black for aid in that province; and Jeremiah Lambert was ordained for the island of Antigua, in the West Indies, where there was a flourishing Methodist society. For the United States the elders were John Tunnell, William Gill, LeRoy Cole, Nelson Reed, John Haggerty, Reuben Ellis, Richard Ivey, Henry Willis, James O'Kelley, and Beverly Allen. John Dickins, Ignatius Pigman, and Caleb Boyer were ordained deacons.

Although Asbury began immediately to exercise episcopal authority, the title of the office to which he was ordained and consecrated was general superintendent, and it was so recorded in the minutes and in his certificate of consecration. He left Baltimore as General Superintendent Asbury, but he thought of and referred to himself as bishop, and his own use of that title caused it to be gradually adopted by Methodists generally, so that within a year he was known as Bishop Asbury throughout the length and breadth of the land. The word " bishop " first appeared in the conference minutes in 1787. The preachers do not seem to have made the change by the official adoption of a resolution or a separate minute, but when Asbury prepared the records of the conference, he wrote " bishops, elders and deacons," instead of " superintendents, elders, and deacons." It so remained. The people and the itinerants accepted the new official title without comment, for they had grown used to it and it was the natural designation, but when John Wesley heard of it he was infuriated. He wrote Asbury one of the bitterest letters he had ever indited to one of his disciples:

> London, September 20, 1788.
>
> There is, indeed, a wide difference between the relations wherein you stand to the Americans and the relations wherein I stand to all Methodists. You are the elder brother

> of the American Methodists; I am, under God, the father of the whole family. Therefore I naturally care for you all in a manner no other person can do. Therefore I, in a measure, provide for you all; for the supplies which Dr. Coke provides for you, he could not provide were it not for me — were it not that I not only permit him to collect, but also support him in so doing. But in one point, my dear brother, I am little afraid both the Doctor and you differ from me. I study to be little; you study to be great. I creep; you strut along. I found a school; you a college! Nay, and call it after your own names! Oh, beware! Do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and "Christ all in all!"
>
> One instance of this, of your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you, suffer yourself to be called bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me a bishop. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this! Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better. Thus, my dear Franky, I have told you all that is in my heart. And let this, when I am no more seen, bear witness how sincerely I am,
>
> Your affectionate friend and brother,
> JOHN WESLEY.[5]

This was the last of many letters Asbury had received from Wesley, in which the founder of Methodism accused him of virtually every crime in the ecclesiastical calendar. But when he thus railed at Asbury for calling himself bishop, Wesley was in his eighty-sixth year, and his letter obviously expresses the childish jealousy and peevishness of a garrulous old man rather than any change of opinion regarding the validity of Asbury's ordination. No one has ever taken the missive seriously except Methodist historians, who have always felt it incumbent upon them to apologize for every circumstance that lends a touch of humanness to their great men. But Asbury's comment was characteristic; to him the letter was another stone on the tower of persecution which had been erected against him, and he gloried in it. "I received a bitter pill from one of my greatest friends," he wrote. "Praise the Lord for my trials also — may they all be sanctified." But except for this entry in his Journal, he ignored the letter, and continued to call himself bishop. He had no doubt of his right to the title; he had recovered swiftly from the shock he had felt when Dr. Coke proposed to consecrate him on orders from Wesley, and convinced himself that he was a legitimate successor to the Apostles. "I will tell the world what I rest my authority on," he wrote. "First, divine authority; second, seniority in America; third, the election of the general conference; fourth, my ordination by Thomas Coke, William Philip Otterbein (German Presbyterian minister), Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey; fifth, because the signs of an apostle have been seen in me." [6]

Asbury did not agree with Wesley and Dr. Coke that a bishop and an elder were the same, and that a distinction of office only existed between them. He held to the three orders of bishop, elder, and deacon, and declared that "there is not, nor indeed to my mind can there be, a perfect equality between a constant president and those over whom he always presides." As bishop he considered himself the servant of his brethren, but at the same time he was their ruler, and insisted on implicit obedience to his mandates; no pope ever claimed a more unlimited authority than Asbury claimed. In his famous and lengthy letter to Bishop McKendree, written only a few years before his death, he declared that the apostolic order was lost fifty years after the death of the last of the Apostles, and that it was restored in regular succession by John Wesley, Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury and succeeding Methodist bishops. And the line of succession, he indicated, lay in bishops of the Methodist church alone. Throughout his reign his enemies frequently compared him to the pope, which he resented. "I pity those," he wrote, "who cannot distinguish between a pope of Rome and an old worn man of sixty years who had the power given him of riding five thousand miles a year, at a salary of eighty dollars, through summer's heat and winter's cold; travelling in all weather, preaching in all places; his best covering from rain often but a blanket; the surest sharpener of his wits hunger, from fasts voluntary and involuntary; his best fare for six months of the twelve coarse kindness; and his reward from too many suspicion, envy, and murmurings all around."

Wesley's outburst was provoked not alone by Asbury's assumption of the title of bishop, but also by the fact that the conference of 1787 repudiated him so far as the government of the American Church was concerned, an action which Asbury had foreseen and against which he had guarded himself by insisting upon election as superintendent. At the Baltimore conference of 1784 the preachers adopted a minute binding themselves "during the lifetime of the Rev. Mr. Wesley to obey his commands in matters belonging to church government." [7] This was done at the suggestion of Dr. Coke, and over the protest of Asbury, who did not "think it practical expediency to obey Mr. Wesley at three thousand miles' distance, in all matters relative to church government." The correctness of Asbury's viewpoint, and of his belief that American Methodism was becoming impatient of English control, was soon proved.

Early in 1787 Wesley instructed Dr. Coke and Asbury to call a general conference, and further ordered the Americans to elect Richard Whatcoat joint superintendent for America, and Freeborn Garrettson superintendent for Nova Scotia. Dr. Coke issued a call, but the preachers refused to obey him. The conference met at the regularly appointed time in Baltimore, where Dr. Coke was severely rebuked for attempting to fix the time of the sitting, and was compelled to sign a certificate binding himself not to exercise any government over the American Church unless he was in this country, and even then to confine himself to ordaining, presiding at conferences, and travelling. The conference ignored Wesley's commands for the election of Whatcoat and Garrettson, and by unanimous vote rescinded the minute acknowledging Wesley's authority, and left his name off the minutes altogether. It was not until two years later that it reappeared, and it was then inserted in the record merely out of respect to the aged owner of the sect; it was clearly stated that his authority in America was ecclesiastical only, and that Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury had been "elected by the unanimous suffrages of the general conference to superintend the Methodist connexion in America."[8] Dr. Coke added fuel to the flame of opposition that was flaring against him all over the country by asserting, in a sermon, that the omission of Wesley's name from the minutes had hastened his death.

3

During the last days of the organization conference the preachers enacted rules of discipline, adapted the minutes of the English conference to the needs of the American societies, approved the Articles of Religion sent to the United States by Wesley, adopted the title "Methodist Episcopal Church," proposed by John Dickins, and in every other respect carried out the program of legislation formulated by Asbury and Dr. Coke at their pre-conference meetings in Delaware and at Perry Hall. They also passed an important minute endorsing a project for a Methodist school to be operated by the church. This was Methodism's first educational venture, and was the result of a scheme suggested to Asbury in 1780 by John Dickins. Both Asbury and Dickins favoured an institution similar to Wesley's Kingswood School in England, but when Asbury proposed it to Dr. Coke, the latter was more ambitious; he wished the Methodists to found a college.

The Baltimore conference authorized the superintendents to proceed with the scheme, and it was decided to call the institution Cokesbury College, thus honouring both Asbury and Dr. Coke. Asbury circulated a subscription list among the preachers and rich Methodists, and raised about five thousand dollars, with which he purchased building materials and six acres of land at Abingdon, Maryland, then about twenty-five miles from Baltimore. Construction work was begun immediately on a two-storey building 108 feet long and 40 feet wide, and on June 5, 1785, Asbury laid the corner-stone with a sermon from Psalms lxxviii.4–8. "Attired in his long silk gown, and with his flowing bands," says his first biographer, "the pioneer bishop of America took his position on the walls of the college and announced his text. The spirit of the Lord was with him as with Elijah at the school of the prophets at Bethel. As he dwelt upon the importance of a thorough religious education, and looked forward to the effects which would result to the generations to come from the streams which should spring from this opening fountain of sanctified learning, his soul enlarged and swelled with rapturous emotion."

Cokesbury was opened and dedicated on December 8, 9, 10, 1787, Asbury preaching each day in the chapel. His dedicatory sermon was from this ominous text: " O man of God, there is death in the pot." Truman Marsh, a Quaker, was the first teacher, with a class of fifteen in the preparatory school. Later the number of students was increased to twenty-five, and the faculty comprised the Rev. Mr. Heath, an English clergyman of great learning, as president; and Marsh, Jacob Hall, Patrick McCloskey, and Charles Trite. In 1789 the school had thirty students, and in 1792 seventy, and on January 26, 1794, it was incorporated and authorized to confer degrees, and to enjoy other privileges under the law. It was destroyed by fire on December 7, 1795.

Asbury wrote a *Plan of Education Established in Cokesbury College,* which was incorporated in the Discipline in 1789, and which set forth the general scheme and purpose of the institution. The school received for education and board the sons of the elders and preachers of the Methodist Church, poor orphans, and the sons of subscribers and other friends. Those who could afford to do so were expected to pay a tuition fee of four guineas a year, but all others were taught, clothed, and boarded free of charge. The curriculum embraced instruction in English, Latin, Greek, logic, rhetoric, history, geography, natural philosophy, and astronomy, and " when the finances of our college will admit of it, the Hebrew, French, and German languages." Of the religious feature of the school, the *Plan* said:

> But our first object shall be to answer the design of Christian education, by forming the minds of the youth, through

> divine aid, to wisdom and holiness, by instilling into their tender minds the principles of true religion, speculative, experimental, and practical, and training them in the ancient way, that they may be rational, scriptural Christians. For this purpose we shall expect and enjoin it, not only on the president and tutors, but also upon our elders, deacons, and preachers, to embrace every opportunity of instructing the students in the great branches of the Christian religion.
>
> And this is one principal reason why we do not admit students indiscriminately to our college. For we are persuaded that the promiscuous admission of all sorts of youth into a seminary of learning is pregnant with many bad consequences. For are the students likely (suppose they possessed it) to retain much religion in a college where all that offer are admitted, however corrupted already in principle as well as practice? And what wonder, when (as too frequently it happens) the parents themselves have no more religion than their offspring?
>
> For the same reason we have consented to receive children of seven years of age, as we wish to have the opportunity of "teaching their young ideas how to shoot," and gradually forming their minds through the divine blessing, almost from their infancy, to holiness and heavenly wisdom, as well as human learning. . . . We prohibit play in the strongest terms.[9]

To assist the students in attaining that holiness which was Asbury's constant goal, their daily conduct was prescribed by thirty-two "Rules for the Economy of the College and Students," of which some of the more remarkable are as follows:

> The students shall rise at five o'clock in the morning, summer and winter, at the ringing of the college bell.
>
> All the students, whether they lodge in or out of the college, shall assemble together in the college at six o'clock, for public prayer, except in case of sickness; and on any omission shall be responsible to the president.
>
> From morning prayer until seven they shall be allowed to recreate themselves, as is hereafter directed.

> At seven they shall breakfast.
>
> From eight to twelve they are to be closely kept to their respective studies.
>
> From twelve to three they are to employ themselves in recreation and dining — dinner to be ready at one o'clock.
>
> From three to six they are again to be kept closely to their studies.
>
> At six they shall sup.
>
> At seven there shall be public prayer.
>
> From evening prayer until bedtime they shall be allowed recreation.
>
> They shall all be in bed at nine o'clock, without fail.
>
> Their recreations shall be gardening, walking, riding, and bathing, without doors; and the carpenter's, joiner's, cabinet-maker's, or turner's business, within doors.
>
> The students shall be indulged with nothing which the world calls play. Let this rule be observed with the strictest nicety; for those who play when they are young will play when they are old.
>
> The elders, deacons, and preachers, as often as they visit Abingdon, shall examine the students concerning their knowledge of God and religion.
>
> If a student be convicted of any open sin, he shall, for the first offence, be reproved in private; for the second offence, he shall be reproved in public; and for the third offence, he shall be punished at the discretion of the president; if incorrigible, he shall be expelled.
>
> But if the sin be exceedingly gross, and a bishop see it necessary, he may be expelled for the first, second, or third offence.
>
> Idleness, or any other fault, may be punished with confinement at the discretion of the president.[10]

These rules were enforced with the utmost severity, and there were many and frequent punishments; Cokesbury became noted as the strictest college in America, as well as the most religious. In later years, Asbury realized that his regimen had been too harsh, and modified it for subsequent educational ventures. "We might have managed better," he wrote. "We were to have all the boys become angels." Throughout its ten years of existence Cokesbury was the source of continual anxiety to him; it constantly expended more money than was collected for it, and Asbury was compelled to spend much time begging for funds, himself donating a large part of his annual salary of sixty-four dollars and frequently parting with his shirt and coat to help the school in an emergency. He was in Charleston, South Carolina, when he received definite word that the institution had burned, and wrote in his Journal: "We have now a second and confirmed account that Cokesbury College is consumed to ashes, a sacrifice of about ten thousand pounds in about ten years. Its enemies may rejoice, and its friends need not mourn. Would any man give me ten thousand pounds a year to do and suffer again what I have done for that house, I would not do it. The Lord called not Mr. Whitefield or the Methodists to build colleges. I wished only for schools — Doctor Coke wanted a college. I feel distressed at the loss of the library." [11]

Asbury looked upon the destruction of Cokesbury as a direct sign from the Lord, who thus notified the Methodists that He did not want them to establish an institution of higher learning. Asbury now proposed grammar-schools and academies, and drew up an elaborate plan for one such school in each Methodist circuit. But Dr. Coke was eager to rebuild the college; he felt that an institution authorized to confer degrees gave tone to the whole connexion. He collected a considerable sum in Abingdon, and then went to Baltimore, where he formed a committee of seventeen leading Methodists to handle the new project. This group obtained more than four thousand dollars, and additional sums were promised by business men on condition that the new school be located in Baltimore instead of Abingdon.

One of the principal opponents of Methodism in Baltimore at this time was one Brydon, a British army barber who had settled in the city and opened the Fountain Inn. His hostelry became the resort of army officers, the landed gentry and other aristocrats, and was the stopping place of George Washington and other notables on their visits to the Maryland city. Brydon took especial pains to show his contempt for the Methodists, and to vex them erected a huge dance hall next door to the Light Street Church, the third Wesleyan meeting-house erected in Baltimore. When his place was finished, he held his balls and concerts on the same nights that the Methodists gathered for their religious exercises. "It was a strange sight," says a Methodist historian, "fiddling and dancing going on in one room, and singing and praying in the next, within hearing of each other." Sometimes Brydon's functions were interrupted by the moans and groans of a devout Methodist writhing in the fits and convulsions of conversion, and his dancers would rush from the hall into the church, eager to see the greater attraction.

The business of the dance hall languished during a Methodist revival at which scores were having fits together, and Brydon employed hoodlums to break up the Methodist meetings. The people generally disapproved of these tactics, and many of Brydon's guests packed their belongings and left the Fountain Inn. Meanwhile the Methodist preachers had been imploring the Lord to descend with fire and sword and destroy the dance hall, and frequently expressed confidence that their prayers would be answered and the Brydon edifice burned to the ground. Brydon finally put the property on the market, and Dr. Coke's Methodist committee purchased it for one thousand five hundred and thirty pounds, of which six hundred pounds were raised in Baltimore by a house-to-house canvass. The building was immediately fumigated and remodelled, and, the devil of the dance having been cast out by an extensive prayer and preaching service, was reopened as a college. It prospered, and within a few months was giving instruction to more than two hundred pupils. But the Methodists forgot to ask the Lord to call off His flames, and on December 4, 1796, less than a year after the college was opened, it was destroyed by fire, as well as the Light Street Church, a carpenter shop, and the home of a Methodist named Hawkins, with a total loss of about twenty thousand pounds. "It affected my mind," wrote Asbury when he heard of the disaster, "but I concluded

God loveth the people of Baltimore, and He will keep them poor, to make them pure; and it will be for the humiliation of the society."[12] But a building immediately behind the old dance hall, which Brydon's customers had used for a dressing-room and which he had not sold, was not burned. Later the Methodists purchased this structure and converted it into a parsonage for the rebuilt Light Street Church. It was there that Asbury maintained the only place in the world which he would by any stretch of the imagination call home — a closet in the attic, where he kept a cot, and in which he stored his books, his saddle-bags, and his extra coat when he had one.

Asbury was greatly discouraged by these successive catastrophes, but he continued his campaign of educating the young Methodists, and during the next twenty years founded innumerable schools and academies, although he was never able to obtain sufficient financial support to begin his project of a school for each circuit. He helped a county academy in Augusta, Georgia, not long after Cokesbury and Asbury Colleges were destroyed, and six years after his death it became the property of the Ohio and Kentucky conferences, and was called Augusta College. He opened seminaries in the frontier settlements of Pennsylvania, and in Kentucky, founding Bethel Academy in the latter state, but it failed financially, and its collapse hastened the mental breakdown of Francis Poythress. Ebenezer Academy was established in Brunswick County, Virginia, about 1790, and in Uniontown, in Western Pennsylvania, Asbury opened a seminary about 1795, but neither survived more than a few years. Other schools suffered the same fate, and the educational schemes of American Methodism were never on a really stable foundation, with good prospects of success, until fifteen or twenty years after Asbury's death. By that time the denomination was prosperous, and was able to proceed with the plans which eventually resulted in the establishment of such noted schools as Wesleyan University, Randolph-Macon College, Dickinson College, Drew Theological Seminary, Allegheny College, and others.

4

Another important minute adopted by the Baltimore conference of 1784 related to the publication and sale of religious books and periodicals, and paved the way for the later organization of the Methodist Book Concern, the official publishing house of the Methodist Church. John Wesley always attached great importance to books and magazines, and one of the most important methods of disseminating Methodism was by the distribution of cheap editions of his own writings, and those of Fletcher and other Methodist apostles. Robert Williams, one of the early English preachers and author of the first Methodist miracle in America, brought many of Wesley's books to this country, and had others reprinted here. These he sold to the Methodist converts, but in 1773 Asbury accused him of selling some of them for profit, which he said " does by no means look well." The first conference of 1773 adopted a minute prohibiting the reprint of any of Wesley's books without his permission, and instructing Williams to sell the books he had and to print no more.

It was nine years before any further mention of books was made in the conference minutes, but during this period Asbury and others worked out a systematic plan for the publication and sale of selected volumes, using the profits to pay the expenses of poor itinerants whose flocks took them too literally when they preached free salvation. This scheme was legalized by the conferences of 1782, and the organization on meeting in Baltimore instructed the preachers to be active in the diffusion of Wesley's books, and empowered them to beg money from the rich with which to buy books for the poor. Each itinerant and local preacher was supposed to carry as many books as possible on his rounds, and to sell them at the best prices obtainable. This work became so important that in 1789 John Dickins and Philip Cox were appointed book stewards, the former for the territory extending from Calvert circuit in Maryland to Cumberland, Tennessee, embracing forty-nine circuits and stations, and Cox for the territory from Washington to Gloucester, embracing forty-eight circuits and stations. A year later Dickins was placed in charge of the whole work, and his title was fixed as " Superintendent of the Printing and Book Business." In 1792 the name " Book Concern " first appeared in the minutes, and since then the publication house has been so called. It is now one of the largest publishing businesses in the world, with a total annual sales volume of more than $4,000,000.

As superintendent of the book business Dickins was assisted by Cox and William Thomas, who were appointed travelling book-stewards. He opened an office at 43 Fourth Street, Philadelphia, and lent the Concern six hundred pounds of his own money. His first publication was volume one of the *Arminian Magazine,* at twelve shillings. The first books were prepared at the printing plant of Prichard & Hall, in Market Street, but later all of the mechanical work was awarded to Solomon Conrad of 22 Pewter-Platter Alley.

For several years the book business prospered under Dickins's supervision, but he died of yellow fever in 1798, and to succeed him Asbury appointed Ezekiel Cooper, then the stationed preacher on the Wilmington, Delaware circuit. Cooper received the appointment within a week after Dickins's death, but Philadelphia was under quarantine, and he was unable to get into the city until December 1. He then found the business badly disorganized, and refused to accept the post until the affairs had been straightened out and he had reached an agreement with Asbury regarding remuneration and publishing methods. However, Asbury insisted, and Cooper agreed to take charge, but without responsibility. At the second conference of 1799 he was unanimously elected book agent, and Asbury ordered him to go to work without further quibbling.

Cooper operated the book business with great success, and for a year or so Methodism in Philadelphia experienced a great boom, for Cooper was an indefatigable labourer and performed valiant service in soul-saving as well as in book-selling. But Satan was also active, and soon scored a notable victory. The Methodists had now been in Philadelphia for more than thirty years, and except for the wrangling engendered by Asbury's insistence upon the rules during his first year in this country, had dwelt together in singular peace and unity; while Wesleyan societies in other parts of America were enjoying their periodical bickerings, the Philadelphians had remained quiet and inoffensive. Naturally enough, this was a great strain, and early in 1800 all of the pent-up hatreds, jealousies, and backbitings burst out in a furious and ugly dispute that greatly distressed Asbury and afforded great amusement to the ungodly. The congregations of St. George and Ebenezer Churches divided into hostile factions, one comprising the poor of Philadelphia Methodism and the other the well-to-do. The stationed preacher, Lawrence McCombs, sided with the rich, and there were charges and countercharges of backsliding, card-playing, dancing, laughing, and other offences.

Cooper endeavoured at first to act as conciliator, but was soon drawn into the dispute as an active partisan of the poor faction, and even Asbury was unable to bring the warring Methodists together. The annual conference of 1801 sought to compose the turbulent waters, but failed, and McCombs and his faction withdrew and set up a Church of their own in the old City Academy.[13] Cooper now opposed the separatists with great vigour, and devoted much of his time to building up the St. George and Ebenezer congregations. Asbury was finally compelled to recognize the McCombs faction, and it took its place as a third Methodist congregation, assuming the name of the Union Church. But Cooper had aroused such enmity that the opposing Methodists, abandoning for the time being the Christian practice, now altogether in abeyance, of turning the other cheek, began a campaign to drive him from the city, even though it meant the loss of the book business. They wrote inflammatory letters to Asbury, accusing Cooper of the most heinous offences against the Methodist God; one man is said to have indited a solemn missive affirming that on a certain Sunday morning he himself, in person, saw the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper smile openly and brazenly, and that the book agent had failed to follow this lapse from holiness with an immediate prayer for forgiveness. But he could produce no witnesses, and such a serious charge would not hold on his unsupported word.

Cooper indignantly denied all of these accusations, and Asbury again tried to conciliate and effect a compromise, but in vain. He finally decided to remove the book business to Baltimore, and the conference, at his direction, gave him the necessary authority. But Cooper protested that he would not be driven from Philadelphia, and wrote in his Journal: " Certain persons began to boast how they had prevailed in having the business removed, etc. *They!* Was it *they* that did it? And were all these difficulties, risks, expenses, and stoppages merely to please and oblige them? I spoke to George Roberts about their triumph, and told him I would not go if this was the case and they continued their triumphant boast." These and other reasons for not moving he submitted to Asbury, who wrote a characteristic reply:

> I think of any preacher that has been stationed in Philadelphia for six or seven years I would conclude it was time for him to be removed if he was not local, and altogether out of my power. I wish every person that can be moved to be moved, and everything that can be done for peace and union to be done.
>
> You are not ignorant that other preachers have been called, suspended, and some removed at a word, to serve the wishes of some dissatisfied minds. You will take your turn with others, and as there was such unanimity in the vote of the conference, it ought to have weight with you. As an individual your going or staying is nothing to me. I have no spleen against you. I only want peace in the societies, by any good means. I wonder why you should wish to stay where you must have had great distress of mind, and I have thought it may be the cause of your ill health.[14]

Cooper thereupon prepared to remove to Baltimore, but before he could make the necessary arrangements the conference of 1804 decided that, after all, Baltimore was not a suitable place, and the book business was moved instead to New York. There it has remained to this day, as the principal depository of the Methodist Church in America.

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[1] Stevens: *History of the Religious Movement Called Methodism*, etc.; Vol. II, p. 210.

[2] Ibid., p. 215.

[3] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. II, p. 172.

[4] Buckley: *History of Methodism in U. S.;* Vol. I, p. 385 et seq.

[5] Smith: *Life and Labors of Francis Asbury*, p. 118.

[6] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 561.

[7] Emory: *History of the Discipline*, p. 26.

[8] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. II, p. 498.

[9] Emory: *History of the Discipline*, p. 152.

[10] Ibid., p. 155, et seq.

[11] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 287.

[12] Ibid., p. 329.

[13] Phoebus: *Beams of Light on Early Methodism*, p. 285, et seq.

[14] Ibid., p. 280.

CHAPTER X

Among the Gentiles

I

THE organization conference at Baltimore adjourned on the morning of January 3, 1785, and in the evening of that day Francis Asbury preached his first episcopal sermon in the Lovely Lane Chapel, on Ephesians iii.8, " Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." During the excitement attending the arrival of Dr. Coke, and because of the necessity for practicality if he was to retain control of the Methodist societies, Asbury had for the time being laid aside his passion for holiness and humility. But with increased determination he now renewed his quest of these heavenly attributes. He implored the Lord to chastise and humiliate him if he fell into prideful ways and habits of thought, and wrote that he was " sometimes afraid of being led to think something more of myself in my new station than formerly."

Two days after his Baltimore sermon he took to the saddle and started on his first episcopal tour, riding on the first day fifty miles, through a snow-storm, to Fairfax, Virginia, where he was joined by Henry Willis and Jesse Lee. Willis had been elected deacon at Baltimore, but had not been ordained, and Asbury now performed the first official act of his new office by elevating Willis to the diaconate. A few days later he again laid holy hands upon the preacher and ordained him elder. Asbury and his retainers then set out on the road, with Charleston, South Carolina, as their objective, Willis going on ahead to spy out the land, break down the morale of the sinners, and make arrangements for the triumphal entry of Methodism into the South Carolina city, which was a noted sink of sin. John and Charles Wesley had preached there in 1736, and Pilmoor in 1773, but they had made little impression, and the place was now occupied by a dissolute citizenry given over to such diabolical practices as card-playing, dancing, and attendance upon fairs and horse-races. Willis made the acquaintance of Edgar Wells, a prominent merchant, by presenting a letter of introduction from a nephew of General " Mad Anthony " Wayne, whom both he and Asbury had met in Georgetown and with whom they had dined.

Meanwhile Asbury and Lee had ridden into Virginia and North Carolina. They found the people generally much gratified by the episcopal organization of the Church, and by its provisions for the sacraments, and there was a great rush to attend their preaching services and receive the Lord's Supper from hands guaranteed to be holy. " Nothing could have better pleased our church folks," wrote Asbury, " than the late step we have taken in administering the ordinances. To the catholic Presbyterians it also gives satisfaction, but the Baptists are discontented." Asbury had considerable trouble with the Baptists in Virginia and other parts of the South, and later along the western frontier, where jealousy caused frequent bickerings between the sects. At a meeting on Fisher's River, during this tour, several Methodists were prevented from offering their children for baptism by a zealous Baptist who mounted a stump near the water's edge and shouted loudly that they would undoubtedly go to hell if they permitted a Methodist preacher to lay hands upon them. At other points in the South, Asbury was compelled to baptize by immersion instead of sprinkling because of the influence of the Baptists, but within a year or two the Methodists became so powerful that they could ignore their opponents, and thereafter baptized as they pleased.

Asbury was now travelling at the rate of more than thirty miles a day. The horse on which he had ridden out of Baltimore collapsed, but he obtained another and pushed on. At a meeting on the Salisbury circuit he appeared for the first time in cassock, gown, and bands, and Lee was so horrified by the Romish spectacle that he refused to remain for the conclusion of the services. His criticism was so loud and bitter that Asbury forthwith packed his canonicals in his saddle-bags, and thereafter wore them but seldom, for other simple Methodists objected also. Finally he left them off altogether. Late in February he and Lee arrived in Charleston and went immediately to the home of Edgar Wells, whom they found just leaving the house to attend the theatre. But instead of enjoying the play Wells remained at home and devoted the evening to prayer and religious conversation. He became, of course, a Methodist; when his sinful friends heard that he was entertaining three preachers, they immediately gave him up as lost.

The Methodist sympathizers obtained the use of an old meeting-house which had been abandoned by the Baptists, and the next day, Sunday, February 27, Lee delivered the first sermon of the campaign. He addressed about twenty hearers, who "seemed quite amazed." In the afternoon Willis preached, and that night Lee again amazed a somewhat larger congregation. There was then no service until Wednesday, when Asbury mounted the pulpit; thereafter he occupied it daily for more than a week. The preaching made a great stir among the sinners; several miraculous conversions were accomplished, and when Asbury and Lee departed, they left behind them a strong society, with more than thirty enthusiastic members, under the care of Willis. A year later Asbury found them prepared to undertake the construction of a church, which was erected in Cumberland Street.

Charleston thus became, and remains to this day, one of the important strongholds of the Methodist Church, but it was also the scene of the first schism in the new body. This was almost entirely a local affair, with only feeble echoes in Georgia, Maryland, and Delaware, but nevertheless it was important, for it was the first challenge to Asbury's power as bishop, and it anticipated and aggravated the more serious break led by James O'Kelley of Virginia less than a year later. The trouble in Charleston was the result of the disaffection of William Hammett, an English missionary who, by prayerful intervention with the Almighty, had prevented the ship from sinking on Dr. Coke's second voyage to America. Because of this sea-going miracle Hammett was highly regarded, and when he landed in this country was given command of the Charleston societies. He was an eloquent preacher, and a man of considerable organizing ability, but he had also a flair for social contacts; he was ambitious to enliven his services with ritual, and to make his church a rich man's meeting-house. The plainness of Asbury and the other Methodist preachers irked him, and he was sorely wrought upon by the strictness with which the church laws were administered. He soon began to write abusive letters, accusing Asbury of being disloyal to Wesley, and denouncing him as a seceder from Methodism because he would not wear the gown and bands of a bishop.

Asbury rebuked him, and in 1791 Hammett led a secession from the Methodist Church, erecting a meeting-house in Charleston, which he called Trinity Church. His followers called themselves Primitive Methodists. The movement spread into Georgia, Maryland, and Delaware, and churches were erected in Savannah, Georgetown, and Wilmington. Hammett also built a second church in the suburbs of Charleston. He published pamphlets attacking Asbury and Coke, which were vigorously answered by the Bishops and by Thomas Morrell, a prominent itinerant. Asbury referred to Hammett as "awful Hammett," and accused him of trying to destroy Methodism, and "scatter arrows and fire-brands through the whole connexion." Hammett had much difficulty keeping his flock in order, and when Asbury finally expelled him from the Methodist ministry, his followers in Georgia and Delaware returned to the fold, followed by the Charleston faction a few years later. When Hammett died, in 1803, his original church in Charleston was served for a time by the Rev. Mr. Brazier, who had been a missionary in India. But Mr. Brazier decided to look after himself, and sold the church building to a Protestant Episcopal clergyman. It was not returned to the Methodists until they had brought suit in the state courts.

Having organized the Methodists in Charleston under the supervision of Henry Willis, Asbury and Lee retraced their steps to Georgetown, where they formed another society and left the fledgling Methodists under the care of Woolman Hickson, who was destined, in 1787, to establish Methodism in Brooklyn. Captain Thomas Webb, and probably other early Methodists, had preached in Brooklyn before the Revolution, but no society was formed until Hickson appeared and discoursed from a table in Sands Street. Later Ezekiel Cooper, while stationed in New York, had charge of the spiritual destinies of the Brooklyn Methodists, but he wrote sorrowfully that "the people of this village are very careless about religion, although they have had much preaching."[1] However, in time Brooklyn became a hotbed of almost every faith known to man; in many parts of the city it is almost impossible to sleep on Sunday mornings because of the incessant ringing of church bells.

From Georgetown Lee went north, while Asbury again turned south and rode into North Carolina, where he met Dr. Coke, who had been itinerating with great success in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Together they attended the first conference of the new Church at the home of Green Hill, on Tar River in North Carolina, and then journeyed northward through Virginia and Maryland, stopping at Mount Vernon to call upon George Washington with their anti-slavery petition. They reached Baltimore on June 1, and a few days later Dr. Coke sailed for Europe, having been five months in this country. He was bitterly attacked by Charles Wesley when he arrived in England, and was accused of going farther in the organization of an Episcopal Church than John Wesley had intended. Dr. Coke defended himself in speeches and pamphlets, and finally the owner of the creed came to his assistance, and the clamour of Charles Wesley and other critics was stilled.

2

Asbury was now alone in the headship of the Methodist organization in America, and was, as God had told his mother he would be, the foremost churchman on the continent. The people were just beginning to realize the magnitude of the work accomplished by the Methodist itinerancy during the period of the Revolution, and looked upon the preachers with respect and admiration; there was a natural revulsion from the feeling of suspicion which had caused so much persecution during the war, and everywhere the itinerants penetrated, they attracted large congregations and had great successes. Asbury now had the connexion organized and working like a well-oiled machine, and the preachers, pushing into the outlying districts where there was great social and economic distress, were slowly arousing the whole country to the pitch of emotional insanity which within a few years brought on wide-spread revivals and tremendous religious excitement.

Methodism had also acquired a new dignity through the proceedings of the conference in Baltimore and the presence in this country of so eminent an English ecclesiastic as Dr. Coke. Heretofore the sect had been nothing more than a religious society within and subject to the laws of the Church of England; it now stood proudly before the country with a complete and efficient episcopal organization, with all necessary functionaries invested with the divine power to administer the sacraments and open the pearly gates. Methodism was thus the first Protestant Episcopal Church in America, for the colonial fragments of the Church of England were not reorganized until the autumn of 1785, and the consecration of Dr. Coke preceded that of Bishop Samuel Seabury by the Scotch non-juring bishops at Aberdeen.

When the first conference of 1785 was held, the Methodist Church had 18,000 members, 104 itinerant preachers, and several hundred local preachers and exhorters, and owned or was using more than sixty chapels in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia. Societies had been organized as far south as Georgia and as far north as Ashgrove, New York, where Philip Embury had planted an isolated group of Wesleyans on his removal there from New York City. Freeborn Garrettson went to Nova Scotia soon after the meeting in Baltimore to help William Black, and when he returned in 1787, Asbury sent him into the wilds of upper New York State, where he laboured with such zeal that within a year six hundred men and women had joined the Methodists, and societies had been formed throughout the valley of the Hudson. On Long Island there was a veritable network of Methodist organization, and there were many on Staten Island, and in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In Maryland and Delaware, where Asbury had performed most of his work during the Revolution, Methodism was the dominant religious faith, and was constantly gaining ground in North Carolina and Virginia.

As early as 1781 Asbury licensed Robert Wooster as a local preacher and dispatched him into the Redstone settlements beyond the Alleghenies, where Wooster continued to preach for several years. His first convert was John Jones of Maryland, who had built a cabin on Redstone Creek in 1768. Jones walked ten miles to Beesontown, now Uniontown, Pennsylvania, to hear Wooster, and thereafter the Redstone cabin was one of the Methodist preaching places. Two years after Wooster's departure for the new field Asbury sent Jeremiah Lambert into the Holston country across the southern mountain range in the eastern ends of Kentucky and Tennessee, and in that same year Francis Poythress, assigned to the Allegheny circuit, crossed the mountains to the waters of the Little Youghiogeny. In 1784 Wooster was reinforced in the Redstone district by John Cooper and Solomon Breeze, and the next year Richard Swift and Michael Gilbert were sent into the Holston to help Lambert. Within three years the first Kentucky circuit had been formed with Francis Poythress as presiding elder, and the sinners had begun to stir with uneasiness.

This vast territory formed an episcopal see as large as the whole of Europe outside of Russia, and up and down and across it moved the plodding figure of Francis Asbury, constantly travelling, preaching, praying, singing hymns, settling disputes among the people and the itinerancy, ordaining, attending conferences, baptizing, administering the sacraments, and performing the thousand and one other tasks of his office. When Dr. Coke sailed from Baltimore, Asbury's feet were inflamed with rheumatism, he had boils on his neck and ulcers in his stomach, and the pains of bronchitis tore at his throat and chest, but he would not rest. He was blistered, bled, and purged, and Dr. Coke's ship had scarcely cleared the harbour before he had preached the foundation sermon of Cokesbury College and was riding north. He went over the ground that Dr. Coke had covered in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania since the Baltimore conference, and about the first of the year turned southward into Maryland, and thence into Virginia. Early in 1786 he stopped at the home of Thomas Crenshaw, in Hanover County, Virginia, and organized the first Sunday school in the United States.[2] From this school came John Charleston, a noted Methodist itinerant who as a boy attended the first session and was converted soon afterward.

So great was the success of this venture that similar schools soon became an important part of the Methodist scheme. Asbury himself formed no fewer than a hundred of them in various parts of the United States. Although they had not previously appeared in America, Sunday schools had been a feature of British Methodism since 1781, when Robert Raikes of Gloucester organized the first one at the instance of a young Methodist woman who became the wife of Samuel Bradburn, a famous English preacher. In 1790 the American conferences adopted a resolution officially recognizing them and authorizing their establishment near every place of worship, directing that they be open from six to ten in the morning and from two to six in the afternoon, to teach "gratis, all that will attend and have a capacity to learn." However, it was difficult to induce the children to observe such exacting hours, and as the attendance fell off, the enthusiasm of the volunteer teachers declined. Within a few years it was found necessary to revise the teaching hours, and all attempts at secular instruction were abandoned. The schools then prospered, but no particularly systematic attention was given them until the organization of the Sunday School Union in 1827. Under the direction of this body the present system was developed, and the sale of lesson pamphlets and other Sunday school literature became an important item in the business of the Book Concern.

Dr. Coke returned to America early in 1787, and for a while shared with Asbury, in theory at least, the command of American Methodism, but the first day of 1788 again saw the latter in unquestioned control. The preceding twelve months had comprised one of the most critical and important periods of Methodist history, and it had been definitely demonstrated that the church in this country was able and ready to herd its communicants into heaven without English aid or interference. As we have seen, the Americans had broken with John Wesley, except for the forms of holy brotherhood and filial reverence, by rescinding the minute of 1784 under which the societies in the United States had bound themselves to obey the owner of the creed in all matters of church government; and had further served notice of their independence by defeating Wesley's attempt, through Dr. Coke, to call a general conference and dictate the election of Richard Whatcoat as bishop. And the word "bishop" had been substituted for "superintendent" in the official records, so that Asbury was now bishop in name as well as in fact. Dr. Coke's influence had declined until he was generally recognized as inferior to Asbury, although he remained the nominal superior because of the priority of his consecration, and when in this country was permitted to preside over the conferences, and took precedence in many formal matters. However, Asbury dictated the legislation to be enacted and made the preaching appointments. He was the sole distributor of Methodist patronage.

3

Asbury's second episcopal tour, in 1788, comprised almost twice as much territory as he had covered the previous year, and necessitated constant movement throughout the nation; he travelled during the twelve months about six thousand miles. "I seldom mount my horse for a ride of less distance than twenty miles on ordinary occasions," he wrote, "and frequently have forty or fifty, in moving from one circuit to another. In travelling thus I suffer much from hunger and cold." Two conferences had been called for 1788 by episcopal fiat, to meet in Philadelphia and New York, and six had been regularly appointed for South Carolina, Georgia, Holston, Virginia, Baltimore, and Uniontown, Pennsylvania. This was double the number held in 1787, but glowing reports had been received from the missionaries and evangelists sent to carry the banner of Methodism into Georgia and western Pennsylvania and across the mountains into the Holston country, and Asbury decided that the time was now come when these districts should be organized into working units of the Church. He started his journey through the vast domain of Wesleyanism from Virginia early in January, and rode north through North Carolina, Maryland, and Delaware, and into New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York.

He then turned southward again, and early in March arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, but his reception was probably not what he had expected. Both he and Dr. Coke had incurred the enmity of the South Carolinians by their agitation against slavery, and a crowd gathered to mob him. "While another was speaking in the morning to a very crowded house," he wrote, "a man made a riot at the door; an alarm at once took place; the ladies leaped out at the windows of the church, and a dreadful confusion ensued. Again, whilst I was speaking at night, a stone was thrown against the north side of the church; then another on the south; a third came through the pulpit window, and struck near me inside the pulpit. I, however, continued to speak on; my subject, 'How beautiful upon the mountains,' etc."[3] He left the city a few days later, prophesying that in due time "God will work here," and went for the first time into Georgia, where George Whitefield and the Wesleys had preached more than fifty years before. At the forks of Broad River he held the first Georgia conference, with six itinerants and four probationers in attendance; the work had prospered mightily since he dispatched John Major and Thomas Humphreys into the state in 1786. He itinerated in Georgia for three weeks and then rode again into South Carolina and thence to the Johns River district of North Carolina. There he obtained a pack-horse and made preparations for his first crossing of the Alleghenies, entering the mountains on April 28, 1788.

Surmounting the eastern mountains in these pleasant times is merely a matter of filling the gasoline tank, or of purchasing a railroad ticket, but in Francis Asbury's day the journey was attended by great dangers from Indians and wild beasts. The episcopal party found the terrain rough and the mountains difficult to climb, and scarcely had they lost sight of the Carolina settlements before they were drenched by a heavy rain-storm, and frightened by the thunder and lightning. They crept for shelter into a dirty little cabin which hunters had erected on the mountain-side, and Asbury complained in his Journal that the filth might have been taken from the floor with a spade. The night wore on, and was cold, but the wood they gathered was wet and would not burn; they huddled in their greatcoats and miserably awaited the dawn. They swam their horses across the Watauga the next morning, and during the afternoon Asbury had a violent headache. "I prayed to the Lord for help," he wrote, "and presently a profuse sweat broke out upon me, and my fever entirely subsided."[4] Vastly encouraged by this evidence of divine interest, they pushed on, and at nine o'clock in the evening came to the home of a Methodist named Grear, where they preached, prayed, sang hymns, ate, and slept. The next day they set out for the Holston River, and after many hardships reached the home of General William Russell, who had married a sister of Patrick Henry, widow of General William Campbell, and settled near the present site of Saltville in Washington County, south-western Virginia. There Asbury rested for a day, and then started on a tour of the settlements, preaching and praying constantly, organizing new societies, and encouraging and strengthening the local preaching forces. He held a conference of the Kentucky and Tennessee preachers at hamlets called Half-Acres and Keyswoods, and after two months again climbed the mountains into North Carolina and set his face southward to Virginia.

In July he again heard the call of the west, and in company with Richard Whatcoat and others crossed the Alleghenies for the second time to attend the conference in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Entering the mountains at Clover Lick, now in Pocahontas County, West Virginia, he passed through a territory which is now dotted by populous cities and covered by a network of railroads, but which was then principally virgin forest, with settlements few and far between. In his Journal he wrote this account of the journey:

> Our course lay over mountains and through valleys, and the mud and mire was such as might scarcely be expected in December. We came to an old, forsaken habitation in Tyger's valley [Tygart's, in Greenup County, Kentucky]. Here our horses grazed about, while we boiled our meat. Midnight brought us up at Jones's, after riding forty, perhaps fifty, miles. The old man, our host, was kind enough to wake us up at four o'clock in the morning. We journeyed on through devious lonely wilds, where no food might be found except what grew in the woods or was carried with us. We met with two women who were going to see their friends and to attend the quarterly meeting at Clarksburg. Near midnight we stopped at A —— 's, who hissed his dogs at us; but the women were determined to get to quarterly meeting, so we went in. Our supper was tea. Brothers Phoebus and Cook took to the woods; old —— gave up his bed to the women. I lay along the floor on a few deerskins with the fleas. That night our poor horses got no corn; and next morning they had to swim the Monongahela. After a ride of twenty miles we came to Clarksburg, and man and beast were so outdone that it took us ten hours to accomplish it.
>
> I lodged with Colonel Jackson [grandfather of General Stonewall Jackson]. Our meeting was held in a long, close room belonging to the Baptists. Our use of the house it seems gave offence. There attended about seven hundred people, to whom I preached with great freedom; and I believe the Lord's power reached the hearts of some. After administering the sacrament, I was well satisfied to take my leave. We rode thirty miles to Father Haymond's, after three o'clock Sunday afternoon, and made it nearly eleven before we came in. About midnight we went to rest, and rose at five o'clock

> the next morning. My mind has been severely tried under the great fatigue endured both by myself and my horse. Oh, how glad should I be of a plain, clean plank to lie on, as preferable to most of the beds; and where the beds are in a bad state, the floors are worse! The gnats are almost as troublesome here as the mosquitoes in the lowlands of the seaboards. This country will require much work to make it tolerable. The people are, many of them, of the boldest cast of adventurers, and with some the decencies of civilized society are scarcely regarded, two instances of which I myself witnessed. The great landlords who are industrious will soon show the effects of the aristocracy of wealth, by lording it over their poorer neighbours, and by securing to themselves all the offices of profit and honour. On the one hand, savage warfare teaches them to be cruel; and on the other, the preaching of Antinomians poisons them with error in doctrine; good moralists they are not, and good Christians they cannot be, unless they are better taught.[5]

From the Clarksburg district Asbury pushed on to Morgantown, where a " lifeless, disorderly people " heard him preach. " It is a matter of grief," he wrote, " to behold the excesses, particularly in drinking, which abound here." He rode forty miles out of Morgantown to attend a quarterly meeting at Doddridge's, and the next day again travelled that distance to Uniontown, where he held the conference with seven itinerants and five probationers in attendance. Asbury officiated in gown and bands at the ordination of Michael Leard, a zealous and effective preacher who was regarded as little short of superhuman because he could recite the whole of the New Testament from memory, and also large blocks of the Old. Richard Whatcoat appeared at the service similarly accoutred, and the people were shocked and surprised to hear the visiting prelates read the morning service as abridged by John Wesley and brought to the United States by Dr. Coke. However, this practice, like that of wearing sacerdotal robes, was soon abandoned.

Asbury returned across the mountains to Virginia, and for the next few months travelled up and down the continent, until Dr. Coke returned from England in March 1789, and met him in South Carolina. Together they rode north through Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, and on May 28 began the New York conference. At this time from six to ten conferences were being held each year in various parts of the Methodist territory, but they were considered as constituting one conference, and legislation that began in one was not completed until it had passed through all. Many of the preachers favoured the calling of a general conference, and this probably would have been done in 1787 had not Asbury opposed it, and had it not been for the fact that to call it then would have been truckling to John Wesley, who had ordered it. The demand for such a meeting had grown during two years, and was renewed in 1789, but Asbury forestalled it by the organization of the Council, composed of the bishops and the presiding elders, which was empowered to take over all matters of legislation and administration, under a limited veto granted to each conference. The joker in the formation of this body was that the elders were Asbury's appointees, and could be removed at will.

The Council held its first meeting in Baltimore in December 1789, and fatal defects in its organization immediately began to appear. Among them were the absolute unanimity required to carry a measure, and the fact that the veto of any rule by a conference suspended the rule in that district, so that a Council decision might be operative in one circuit and void in another. The councillors began a campaign for the removal of some of the restrictions which had been laid upon them, and met with such opposition that within two years the whole scheme was abandoned. However, it had served its purpose. For the time being, at least, it had quieted the demand for a general conference, for which Asbury was not ready. And by giving the itinerants and the connexion generally an opportunity to vent their indignation upon the Council, and use it as a vehicle on which to exercise their love of bickering, Asbury had been relieved of much of the criticism which had been directed against him, and was able to pursue with slight interference his plan for the developing of the church organization and the strengthening of the episcopacy.

But James O'Kelley of Virginia would not be stilled. When he first entered the itinerancy he was a warm friend and devoted follower of Asbury, but in time he came to be a figure of some importance, and his ambitions overwhelmed his holiness. Within two years after the organization conference in Baltimore he began to boil with indignation at Asbury's usurpation of autocratic power, and finally centered his grievances in the Bishop's manner of appointing the preachers. This Asbury did with utter disregard of the wishes of the itinerant and the church membership; indeed, he invariably acted in direct opposition to them. Asbury explained that he thus made the appointments to prevent a preacher's becoming popular, and to lessen social mingling between the men of God and their flocks. He once spoke his mind on this matter in a letter to the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, when the latter was stationed in New York.

> Your attention ought to be paid to Discipline, and visiting from house to house, but not to eat and drink. I am pointedly against that. You have a house to eat in; you need not go to feast with the Church of God. We ought to visit as doctors, or as persons to plead the cause of their souls; not as guests, to eat and drink, but as divines for souls. I am convinced it is and will be an evil. We have had few city preachers but what have been spoiled for a poor man's preacher.[6]

O'Kelley soon began to oppose Asbury's rulings at various conferences which both attended, and at the first sitting of the council there was almost open warfare between them. The Virginian gained considerable support among the itinerants, especially among the southerners, who had always shown a tendency toward locating whenever possible, and early in 1790 made the first move toward an open revolt. He wrote a letter to Asbury, to which the latter thus refers in his Journal:

> I received a letter from the presiding elder of this district, James O'Kelley; he makes heavy complaints of my power,

> and bids me stop for one year, or he must use his influence against me. Power! Power! There is not a vote given in conference in which the presiding elder has not greatly the advantage of me; all the influence which I am able to gain over a company of young men in a district must be done in three weeks; the greater part of them, perhaps, are seen by me only at conference, whilst the presiding elder has had them with him all year, and the greatest opportunity of gaining influence; this advantage may be abused; let the bishops look to it; but who has the power to lay an embargo upon me, and to make of none effect the decision of all the conferences of the union? [7]

A "soft, healing epistle" failed to placate the Virginian, and for the next two years he and Asbury engaged in a bitter controversy, each trying to gain support among the itinerants in anticipation of the impending battle. The trouble finally came to a head at the general conference which Asbury had finally permitted to be called for Baltimore in November 1792; and O'Kelley, of course, was defeated, for he had reckoned without Asbury's political astuteness. The Virginian had intended to heckle Asbury from the floor, and try to entangle him in a maze of contradictory explanation, but when the conference opened, Dr. Coke was in the chair, and announced that Bishop Asbury was ill in his lodgings and could not attend the meeting. The conference adopted a resolution of regret, for which O'Kelley voted with the utmost enthusiasm, and then Dr. Coke told the preachers that at Asbury's request he would appoint a preparatory committee to bring forward the business of the conference and see that it was dispatched with speed and regularity. This consumed the first day, and on the second day Asbury was still absent. O'Kelley then brought forward a scheme directed against Asbury's method of making appointments, and designed to strip him of much of his power. He proposed to amend thus the law which gave the Bishop authority to assign preachers:

> After the bishops appoint the preachers at conference to their several circuits, if anyone think himself injured by the

> appointment, he shall have liberty to appeal to the conference and state his objections; and if the conference approve his objections, the bishop shall appoint him to another circuit.[8]

The debate on O'Kelley's amendment began, but before it had fairly got started, the conference received a letter from Asbury:

> MY DEAR BRETHREN: Let my absence give you no pain — Dr. Coke presides. I am happily excused from assisting to make laws by which myself am to be governed; I have only to obey and execute. I am happy in the consideration that I never stationed a preacher through enmity, or as a punishment. I have acted for the glory of God, the good of the people, and to promote the usefulness of the preachers. Are you sure that, if you please yourselves, the people will be as fully satisfied? They often say: "Let us have such a preacher"; and sometimes: "We will not have such a preacher; we will sooner pay him to stay at home." Perhaps I must say: "His appeal forced him upon you." I am one — ye are many. I am as willing to serve you as ever. I want not to sit in any man's way. I scorn to solicit votes. I am a very trembling, poor creature to hear praise or dispraise. Speak your minds freely; but, remember, you are only making laws for the present time. It may be that, as in some other things, so in this, a future day may give you further light. I am yours, etc.,
>
> FRANCIS ASBURY.[9]

Nothing that Asbury could have said on the floor of the conference would have had an effect comparable to that produced by this letter; nor could he, in an hour's speech, have better summed up his arguments against the O'Kelley motion. It had also its very human side; it was a pathetic missive from a sick man who was unable to take his own part, and as such it swayed many of the simple, sentimental itinerants. Before the arrival of the letter it appeared that O'Kelley's motion would be passed and the amendment adopted, but Asbury's arguments turned the tide of battle, and when the vote was taken, O'Kelley was defeated by a large majority, although such noted preachers as Hope Hull and Freeborn Garrettson spoke in favour of his contention.

But O'Kelley would not accept the fortunes of war. The next morning he and several other preachers who had promised to stand by him to the end sent a letter to the conference, declaring that because of the defeat of the amendment they would no longer take part in the meeting. A committee of three, headed by Garrettson, was appointed to persuade them to resume their seats, but O'Kelley would not return. He remained in Baltimore two or three days longer, and then, following a fruitless interview with Dr. Coke, withdrew from the connexion and left the city, accompanied by half a dozen itinerants. They had left their horses about twelve miles out in the country, and walked that distance carrying their saddle-bags, greatcoats, and other belongings over their shoulders. A few weeks later several other preachers sent their resignations to Asbury, among them Rice Haggard and William McKendree, but the latter was soon drawn back into the fold and afterward was elected bishop. Asbury was much incensed by O'Kelley's defection, and a few days after the conference wrote to his friend Thomas Morrell:

> I believe now nothing short of being an *episcopos* was his first aim. His second was to make the council independent of the bishop and the general conference, if they would canonize his writings. This could not be done. His next step was with the authority of a pope to forbid me, by letter, to go one step further with the council, after carrying it once around the continent and through the first council, which ordered me to go round and know the minds of the brethren. His following step was to write against me to Mr. Wesley, who he knew was disaffected to me, because I did not merely force the American conference to accede to Mr. Wesley's appointment of Brother Whatcoat, which I did submit to Dr. Coke only for peace with our old father. How moved he then to make himself independent of me and the general connexion, and dragged in the little Doctor whom, a little be-

> fore, he would have banished from the continent. Then he stipulated with me through the Doctor to let him stay in that station, and consented to leave the decision to a general conference, and when the decision went against him, went away. Now he, who was one of the greatest opposers they had, is suspected of raising a sedition among the local preachers. And, lastly, to set the people against us. Thus he has gone.[10]

In withdrawing from the Methodist connexion O'Kelley was not actuated solely by his enmity toward Asbury and indignation over the defeat of his scheme to lessen the power of the bishop. For some time it had been reported that the Virginian had, in his heart at least, renounced much of the basic dogma of Methodism, and in particular had denied the doctrine of the Trinity and preached against it.[11] He was accused of saying that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were characters and not persons, that these characters all belonged to Jesus Christ, and that Jesus Christ was each and all of them. This, of course, was heinous heresy, and at the conference from which he withdrew there was a movement on foot to have him tried and, if proved guilty, expelled from the ministry. It is quite likely that O'Kelley knew of this plan, and it is just as likely that Asbury knew of it also, and would have used it against the Virginian if the amendment had been adopted.

O'Kelley's schism had very serious results. He had been stationed in one circuit in Virginia for more than ten years, and had made frequent trips into North and South Carolina and into Maryland, so that he had a large following, especially among the local preachers. He went back to his home district as a martyr, and they flocked to his support. Less than a month after the conference Asbury tried to control him to a certain extent by granting him a pension of forty pounds a year, "provided he was peaceable and forbore to excite divisions among the brethren." O'Kelley was in bad financial circumstances, and for a part of the year accepted the money, but later refused it and said he would have nothing more to do with Asbury's branch of Methodism.

The Virginian then proceeded to organize a new church which he called the Republican Methodists, shrewdly taking advantage of the fact that Virginia was then manifesting great interest in the political controversies between the Republicans and the Federalists. He promised greater liberties to lay members, and entire equality in the ministry, and drew away from the Wesleyans many who had begun to chafe under the severe restrictions which governed membership in the Methodist Church. The O'Kelleyites adopted a constitution in 1793, but within eight years abandoned it and changed their name to the Christian Church, the principal point of its dogma being that every man had a right to interpret the New Testament for himself. As soon as he left Baltimore, O'Kelley published a pamphlet attacking Asbury, and the latter gathered facts for a reply and turned them over to Nicholas Snethen, the ablest writer of the connexion. O'Kelley's first literary blast was called *The Author's Apology for Protesting Against the Methodist Episcopal Church,* to which Snethen replied with *A Reply to An Apology*. O'Kelley then brought out *A Vindication of an Apology,* and Snethen published *An Answer to James O'Kelley's Vindication of His Apology*. The discussion on both sides was acrimonious, and the truth was often lost sight of in the heat of accusation and denunciation. In later years Snethen renounced the episcopacy he had so ably defended, and became an organizer of the Methodist Protestant Church.

O'Kelley gained much support through Virginia and the Carolinas, and during the first year of his activities lured more than ten thousand Methodists from the Asburyan fold. He continued to make heavy inroads upon the Methodist membership for more than four years, the defection at one time reaching a total of almost twenty thousand men and women, but shortly after the turn of the century his movement began to weaken and the Methodist Episcopal Church began a corresponding growth. By 1802 the Church had recovered all the ground it had lost and had gained largely besides; it then had a membership of 86,634 whites, almost 20,000 more than when O'Kelley withdrew. The Virginian's schism finally collapsed altogether, and the great majority of his supporters returned to their first love. However, O'Kelley himself continued to preach against Asbury, and as late as 1805 the Bishop made an entry in his Journal which indicates that O'Kelley had, to some extent, anticipated the organization of the present-day Methodist Board of Temperance, Prohibition, and Public Morals. " Mr. O'Kelley has come down with great zeal," wrote Asbury, " and preaches for three hours at a time upon government, monarchy, and episcopacy; occasionally varying the subject by abuse of the Methodists, calling them aristocrats and Tories; a people who, if they had the power, would force the government at sword's point. Poor man!"[12]

The conference sittings of 1789, which witnessed the organization of the Council, Asbury's successful attempts to thwart the calling of a general conference, and the beginning of O'Kelley's open warfare against him, also provided Asbury with another opportunity to display the shrewdness with which he turned ordinary events to the advantage of the Methodists. George Washington was inaugurated President about a month before the New York conference began, and the first day the preachers were in session, Asbury suggested that it would be proper for the Methodist Church to present a congratulatory address to the new executive, " in which should be embodied our approbation of the Constitution, and professing our allegiance to the government." The conference approved, and Asbury and Dr. Coke were appointed to draw up the memorial, while Thomas Morrell, who had known Washington well during his service as chaplain in the Army, was sent to the General's residence to make arrangements for the reception of the two bishops. The document was prepared by Asbury and dated May 29, 1789, and on June 4 or 5 Asbury and Coke called upon General Washington. Asbury read the address:

> TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:
>
> Sir: We, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, humbly beg leave, in the name of our society collectively in the United States, to express to you the warm feeling in our hearts, and our sincere congratulations on your appointment to the Presidentship of these states. We are conscious, from

the signal proofs you have already given, that you are a friend of mankind; and under this established idea, place as full confidence in your wisdom and integrity for the preservation of those civil and religious liberties which have been transmitted to us by the providence of God and the glorious Revolution, as we believe ought to be imposed in man.

We have received the most greatful satisfaction from the humble and entire dependence on the great Governor of the universe which you have repeatedly expressed, acknowledging Him the source of every blessing, and particularly of the most excellent Constitution of these States, which is at present the admiration of the world, and may in future become its greatest exemplar for imitation; and hence we enjoy a holy expectation that you will always prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion, the grand end of our creation and present probationary existence. And we promise you our fervent prayers to the throne of Grace, that God Almighty may endue you with all the graces and gifts of His Holy Spirit, that He may enable you to fill up your important station to His glory, the good of His Church, the happiness and prosperity of the United States, and the welfare of mankind.

Signed, in behalf of the Methodist Episcopal Church,
NEW YORK, May 29, 1789.

THOMAS COKE
FRANCIS ASBURY.

To which Washington replied:

TO THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Sir: I return to you individually, and through you to your society collectively in the United States, my thanks for the demonstration of affection, and the expressions of joy offered, in their behalf, on my late appointment. It shall be my endeavour to manifest the purity of my inclination for promoting the happiness of mankind, as well as the sincerity of my desires to contribute whatever may be in my power to the civil and religious liberties of the American people. In pursuing this line of conduct I hope, by the assistance of divine

> Providence, not altogether to disappoint the confidence which you have been pleased to repose in me.
>
> It always affords me satisfaction when I find a concurrence of sentiment and practice between all conscientious men, in acknowledgment of homage to the great Governor of the universe and in professions of support to a just civil government. After mentioning that I trust the people of every denomination who demean themselves as good citizens will have occasion to be convinced that I shall always strive to prove a faithful and impartial patron of genuine, vital religion, I must assure you in particular that I take in the kindest part the promise you make of presenting your prayers at the throne of grace for me, and that I likewise implore the divine benediction on yourselves and your religious community.
>
> GEORGE WASHINGTON.[13]

The Methodists were thus the first religious body to profess allegiance to the new American government, and the address and reply, printed the next day in the newspapers, aroused a considerable stir. There was much criticism of Dr. Coke for signing the memorial, many of the editors and leaders of other religions holding that it was very improper for him, as a British citizen, to approve the government of this country. The other denominations immediately followed the example of the Methodists, and for some time there was a continual procession of clergymen to and from General Washington's quarters, all bearing addresses and memorials. But the Methodists, having been first, obtained the greater publicity, and the action dispelled the last remaining feeling of resentment which had grown out of the persecutions of the Revolution.

Asbury always professed great admiration for Washington, and his Journal contains many flattering references to him, especially to his religious habits. When the first president died the Bishop was in Charleston, and wrote, on January 4, 1800:

> Slow moved the northern post on the eve of new-year's day, and brought the distressing information of the death of

> Washington, who departed this life December 14, 1799. Washington, the calm, intrepid chief, the disinterested friend, first father and temporal saviour of his country under divine protection and direction. A universal cloud sat upon the faces of the citizens of Charleston; the pulpits clothed in black — the bells muffled — the paraded soldiery — a public oration decreed to be delivered on Friday, the 14th of this month — a marble statue to be placed in some proper situation. These were the marks of sorrow, and these the marks of respect paid by his feeling fellow citizens to the memory of this great man. I am disposed to lose sight of all but Washington — matchless man! At all times he acknowledged the providence of God; and never was he ashamed of his Redeemer; we believe he died, not fearing death. In his will be ordered the manumission of his slaves — a true son of liberty in all points.[14]

4

With Methodism firmly established in the North and South, and with the saplings which had been planted in the Redstone and Holston settlements beyond the Alleghenies already beginning to groan under their burdens of holy fruit, Asbury turned a wishful eye toward the Calvinistic inhabitants of New England, who had not been properly lambasted with the evangelistic lash since the days of Edwards and Whitefield. They formed the only important population groups in the United States in which Methodism had not gained a foothold, and Asbury yearned to let loose his itinerants among these lost sheep. Upon his return from the mountain circuits late in 1788 he devised a scheme for the subjugation of the sin-infested districts, and at his direction the New York conference of the following year instructed Jesse Lee to go and preach Methodist doctrine in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont, and New Hampshire, and in Maine, which was then a province of Massachusetts. Lee was thus the first official missionary to the New Englanders, but he was not the first Methodist to threaten them with eternal torment, for the voices of several itinerants and local preachers had already been heard in the land of the Puritans. Charles Wesley preached in Boston in 1736 on his way home from Georgia, and in 1740 George Whitefield discoursed to great crowds. In 1772 Richard Boardman founded a small society there, and Joseph Pilmoor also touched at Boston on a preaching tour. William Black passed through New England, preaching, on his way to Baltimore from Nova Scotia in 1784, and three years later Freeborn Garrettson, also returning from Nova Scotia, preached in Connecticut and in Boston, where he found three members of Boardman's society still clinging to a belief in the Methodist God. Garrettson returned to this territory on a hasty tour early in 1790, and several of his Hudson Valley preachers penetrated into Connecticut for short distances, but the preaching places they established were accounted parts of the New York circuits. Two years before the arrival of Lee there had been Methodist preaching in Norwalk by Cornelius Cook, whose ministry was short. He died suddenly of yellow fever in New York in 1789, and was buried with his watch and money in his pockets. However, he was disinterred and one of his fellow itinerants took his watch, as a "memorial." [15] It is not known who got his money.

But the three Methodists found by Garrettson were all that remained of the labours of these pioneers, so that Lee entered an almost virgin field, and if credit is due anyone for having established Methodism in New England, he should have it. He preached his first sermon on June 17, 1789, in Norwalk. He tried to obtain a private house in which to launch his message, but was repulsed everywhere he went, and was also refused permission to preach in an old deserted building, and was chased out of a peach orchard. At length he took his stand in the shade of an old apple-tree on the public road, and having collected an audience of about twenty persons by singing hymns and praying loudly, preached to them on "Ye must be born again." Lee then pushed on through Fairfield and other Connecticut towns, and arrived in New Haven on June 21. He delivered a rousing discourse there to a congregation which included the president of Yale College, several students, and a Congregational minister.

From New Haven Lee went to Reading and Stratfield, a parish of Stratford, where he founded societies, the former with three members and the latter with but two. But they were the acorns from which grew giant oaks. He spent three months in Connecticut, surveying the territory, covering as much of it as possible, and arranging for the entry of Methodist souls into heaven, and then crossed the border into Rhode Island, where he astounded and alarmed the Baptists by the fervour of his preaching and, to them, the singularity of his doctrine. There, as elsewhere, Lee and other Methodists had many bitter controversies with the Baptists over the proper method of baptizing. He soon returned to Connecticut, and began a whirlwind tour of the state, which was principally distinguished by the conversion of Nathan Bangs, the son of a village blacksmith who was destined to become a historian of Methodism and one of its greatest preachers. By this time the whole state was rife with rumours of Lee; he was styled a " very remarkable man," high in the councils of the Almighty, who could make his hearers weep and tremble, and possessed the authority to turn the power of the Lord on and off at will. Huge crowds began to attend his meetings, and there was a mighty stir among both the godly and the sinful; and in the towns where he had implanted Methodism there was much talk of erecting chapels. One was built at Stratfield within a year, and another started at Dantown. While holding quarterly meeting in the latter early in March 1790, Lee was cheered by the dramatic appearance of Jacob Brush, George Roberts, and Daniel Smith, veteran itinerants of the southern fields, who rode through the forest and strode into the church just as Lee arose from asking the Lord to send additional emissaries. They had been sent out over Lee's trail by Asbury, who judged that the time had come for the consolidation and organization of Lee's victories. They were instructed to mop up, which they did.

Lee now delivered the Connecticut Methodists, both actual and prospective, into the hands of the new-comers, and himself penetrated into Windham County, Vermont, and then passed through New Hampshire into Massachusetts. But he had slight success, and after a few weeks returned to Connecticut, and on May 10 preached with George Roberts at Middletown. By the latter part of June he had acquired fresh courage, and once more set his face toward the east; he went into Rhode Island and preached in Newport, Bristol, Warren, and Providence, and from Providence rode to Boston, which he reached on July 9, 1790. But the Bostonians were cold to the Wesleyan message, and Lee could find no place to preach; he was rebuffed at every private and public meeting-house in the city, and at all of the state and municipal buildings. But a sympathizer lent him a table, and he carried it under the elms on Boston Common, mounted it and began to sing a hymn. It was the hour of the evening promenade, and many people were abroad. Two gentlemen and two ladies stopped in astonishment, and Lee knelt on top of the table and prayed loudly. Others then came up, and before he finished more than three thousand persons milled about the Common, all striving to press forward and catch the hot words that fell from the lips of the stranger.

Boston now buzzed with excitement, and there was much controversy over Lee's preaching, but the next morning the missionary left the city to its beans and cod-fish and started an extensive tour of the state, visiting Salem, Ipswich, Newburyport, and other towns, and riding into New Hampshire as far as Portsmouth. Within two weeks he returned to Boston and preached to five thousand people on the Common, and then to large congregations in a private home and in an old meeting-house which had been abandoned by the Baptists. He delivered his message also at Charlestown, and then departed for New York to report to Asbury and the conference. Other itinerants had been sent into the Connecticut districts on the heels of Brush, Smith, and Roberts, and were now spreading out to cover the whole New England territory with Methodist preaching. Lee had been sixteen months in the field, and had travelled and preached in every one of the five states; he had organized societies with more than two hundred members, and had formed three circuits, two in Connecticut and one in Massachusetts. Two had been organized by the other preachers before Lee reached New York, and others were being surveyed, and made ready for the coming of additional itinerants.

Lee arrived in New York on the morning of October 4, 1790, and that afternoon spent three hours with Asbury, discussing the spiritual needs of the New Englanders, which Lee reported were very great. The next day Asbury appointed Lee to be the elder in command of all the Methodist work in New England, with headquarters in Boston, and named preachers for Fairfield, New Haven, Reading, and other circuits. As soon as the conference ended, Lee hastened into Connecticut, and travelled rapidly through the state to Hartford. There he rested and formed a society, and then set out for Boston, arriving on November 13 and preaching that night in a private house. But he had been away from Boston more than a month, and the people had forgotten him, so that his reception was even colder than on his first visit. It was too cold to preach on the Common, and he tried for two weeks without success to find a permanent preaching place. He spent the little money he had brought with him, and was reduced to the necessity of selling a magazine, his entire stock of reading matter except a Bible, so he could pay his board and lodging. With two shillings in his pocket he rode to Lynn, where a gentleman had expressed a desire to hear Methodist preaching. He found several persons there who had heard the Wesleyan itinerants in the South, and was handsomely entertained, and preached with great success. Within a few months, on February 20, 1791, he formed at Lynn the first Methodist society in Massachusetts since Richard Boardman's unsuccessful Boston venture. Lee settled this society under the leadership of Benjamin Johnson, a devout Methodist layman, and resumed his travels. For the next year he went back and forth across the whole territory, forming societies, organizing circuits, encouraging the erection of chapels, and in general superintending the activities of his holy brethren.

By the first of the following June Methodism had been firmly implanted throughout New England, and the Methodist itinerant had become a familiar figure in the towns and on the country roads. Several small revivals had been held, and everywhere the sinners were manifesting considerable fright and annoyance at the inroads of the Methodists. Asbury received frequent reports of the success of the itinerants, and concluded that the time had come for him to explore his new domain, and encourage the preachers and converts by his voice and presence. He was delayed by the death of John Wesley and the subsequent departure of Dr. Coke for England, but on June 4, 1791, he set out in a sulky, crossing the New York border into Connecticut and preaching that same day at Wilton. He then went to Reading, where he delivered a sermon to three hundred persons in a barn. He marvelled at the thickly settled country-side, and wrote in his Journals that on his trip across the state he was never out of sight of a house, and sometimes had a view of many churches and steeples, " built very neatly of wood, either for use, ornament, piety, policy, or interest — or it may be for some of all these. Surely God will work powerfully among these people, and save thousands of them. I do feel as if there had been religion in this country once; and I apprehend there is a little in form and theory left. There may have been a praying ministry and people here; but I fear they are now spiritually dead; and am persuaded that family and private prayer is very little practised; could these people be brought to constant, fervent prayer, the Lord would come down and work wonderfully among them." [16] He went on to Stratford, the scene of Lee's early successes, where he preached in the town house, and " had close work on Isaiah lv.5, 7; some smiled, some laughed, some swore, some talked, some prayed, some wept; and had it been a house of our own I should not have been surprised if the windows had been broken."

On June 9 he rode into New Haven, then a noted sink of sin and the object of much evangelical prayer. Deism and atheism were very popular among the students of Yale College, who went about calling themselves Danton, Robespierre, Diderot and Voltaire, and deriding prayer and revealed religion. Dr. Stiles, president of the college, attended Asbury's services, as did a Congregational minister whom he identifies as " the Rev. Mr. E —— ," but the reception they accorded him was chilly, to say the least.

"When I had done," he wrote, "no man spoke to me. We visited the college chapel at the hour of prayer; I wished to go through the whole, to inspect the interior arrangements, but no one invited me. The divines were grave, and the students were attentive; they used me like a fellow Christian in coming to hear me preach, and like a stranger in other respects; should Cokesbury or Baltimore ever furnish the opportunity, I, in my turn, will requite their behaviour by treating them as friends, brethren, and gentlemen. . . . My body is fatigued and listless, my spirit tried and tempted; infirmities cleave to me." He never forgave Yale and New Haven for the slight they had put upon him; several years later, while passing through the town, he wrote: "New Haven! Thou seat of science and of sin! Can thy dry bones live? O Lord, thou knowest!"[17]

Throughout his New England tour Asbury expressed great dissatisfaction with the spiritual condition of the people; he found them, as he had expected, generally Calvinistic, but many had embraced the poisonous doctrines of the Antinomians as the easiest and most pleasant way of getting into heaven, and few had any knowledge of experimental religion or desire for it. He went from New Haven into Northbury and Wallingford, and thence to Middletown, Haddam, and New London, where he was kindly entertained by the New Light Baptists. About the middle of June he crossed into Rhode Island and descended upon Newport. "I feel the state of this people," he wrote. "They are settled upon their lees, and want emptying from vessel to vessel." At Providence he found "reason to hope that souls have gone to glory from this town." He rode into Boston on June 23, but court was in session and the town crowded, so that he had great difficulty in finding a place to lodge. "It was appointed for me to preach at Murray's church," he wrote. "This was not at all pleasing to me; and that which made it worse was that I had only about twenty or thirty people to preach to in a large house; it appeared to me that those who professed friendship for us were ashamed to publish us. On Friday evening I preached again; my congregation was somewhat larger, owing, perhaps, to the loudness of my voice —

the sinners were noisy in the streets. My subject was Revelation iii.17, 18. I was disturbed and not at liberty, although I sought it. I have done with Boston until we can obtain a lodging, a house to preach in, and some to join us. Some things are to be admired in the place and among the people — their bridges are great works, and none are ashamed of labour; of their hospitality I cannot boast; in Charleston, wicked Charleston, six years ago, a stranger, I was kindly invited to eat and drink by many — here by none. There are, I think, nine meeting-houses of the Establishment; Friends' meeting-house, one; Sandemanians, one; Universalists, one; Roman Catholic, one; Episcopalians, two; the Methodists have no house — but their time may come." [18]

Asbury found a Methodist chapel at Lynn, and was moved to exclaim with great gratitude, and praise the town. "Here," he wrote, "we shall make a firm stand, and from this central point, from Lynn, shall the light of Methodism and of truth radiate through the state." He was still in a good humour when he reached Marblehead, and beamed kindly upon the inhabitants, writing in his Journal that his heart was much melted towards them. But at Salem he was again disgruntled. He found five churches there, but all were barred to him, and he was compelled to preach in the court-house. "I am done with Salem," he wrote, "until we can get a better stand. . . . I am now convinced that the Methodists, as a body, have the most religion, and am more and more confirmed in my choice." He went to Manchester, preached in the town house, and then returned to Lynn, where he remained two weeks, preaching several times daily and causing a great stir, and spreading much fright among the sinners. "I feel as if God would work in these states," he wrote, "and give us a good harvest." About the middle of June he travelled through Waltham, Sudbury, Marlborough, and Worcester, and thence to Leicester, Spencer, and Brookfields, where he met a traveller who told him that Vermont had ninety thousand ungodly inhabitants, and begged him to send preachers among them. Satan assailed him after he had left this man; he was very ill, and he broke down and wailed: "I want to be with the Methodists! There appears to be very little religion among these people." He passed again into Connecticut, preaching at Hartford, Canaan, and New Britain, where the "people appeared unfeeling." On July 28, 1791, he rode into New York and set his face up the valley of the Hudson as far as Albany, where Freeborn Garrettson and a troupe of itinerants had been labouring with great success.

So ended his first and preliminary survey of the country of the Puritans, which was thereafter included in his annual episcopal tours and received much attention from the conferences. He penetrated a litttle deeper into the territory on each succeeding trip, and within five years had preached in every county in New England, and in almost every town and village. He held the first New England conference at Lynn on August 3, 1792, and the work had then grown so rapidly that eighteen preachers were appointed to care for the spiritual needs of the Methodists during the ensuing year. Among them was Hope Hull, not the least of whose claims to fame was the fact that he converted the celebrated Lorenzo Dow. Methodism had now been preached throughout New England for more than two years, and neither the people nor the preachers had enjoyed any of the bickering and squabbling in which more fortunate Methodists in other parts of the country had so happily engaged. However, this was an unnatural state of affairs and could not long continue.

There had always been an undercurrent of enmity and jealousy between Asbury and Jesse Lee, perhaps based on the fact that Lee had not been notified of the organization conference at Baltimore. At the general conference in that same city in November 1792, Lee had opposed the amendment offered by James O'Kelley, and later preached against O'Kelley's schism, but he himself led another abortive attempt to reduce Asbury's power by forcing an alteration of several points of the Discipline. He thought the preachers should have more leeway in admitting strangers to the love-feasts and class meetings, and was not satisfied with the manner of singing, nor with the custom of reading the Scriptures in the congregation. Soon after the Baltimore gathering Asbury sent Ezekiel Cooper to the Boston circuit, and when

Cooper passed through Lynn, he found Lee proceeding exactly as if his ideas had been adopted by the general conference. " I found that Brother Lee had neglected some parts of our Discipline," wrote Cooper, " the rules about society meetings, privileges granted to strangers, etc., and that he had introduced some new rules of his own. . . . Such parts [of the Discipline] as he opposed in general conference, though adopted by ever so great a majority, such as the reading of the Scriptures in the congregation, etc., he would not submit to. I told him it showed a stiff obstinacy. He wished everyone to bend to him, and he would not bend to anyone, or even to the conference." [19]

Lee's attitude aroused much resentment among the members of the Lynn society, and many threatened to make another trial of Congregational salvation; a few even proposed to join the Baptists. When the Lynn conference began, on August 1, 1793, the sentiment was as strong against Lee as it had previously been for him, and Asbury realized that his usefulness, at least for the time being, was at an end. Since his previous visit to New England Asbury had travelled through the southern and middle states, and had made another trip across the mountains. He was sick and tired, his throat and chest were inflamed, his back was bent, and his feet were blistered, but nevertheless he pushed on. When he reached Ellington, Connecticut, he had to be lifted from his horse and carried into the house where he was to lodge. He could not ride next morning, but a carriage was procured and he was bounced and jolted through the summer heat to Lynn, where he found Lee disposed to rule or ruin. Cooper wrote that the conference was the most " troublesome, trifling, and quarrelsome " gathering of preachers he had ever attended, and Asbury recorded that " circumstances have occurred which have made this conference more painful than any conference besides." Lee wished to be returned to Lynn and to remain in command of the New England territory, but Asbury told him to go to New York, and in his stead appointed Cooper as presiding elder for New England. But Lee would not agree to leave under three months, and at length proposed that he go to Maine and lay the foundation of Methodism there. Asbury consented to this, and Lee then insisted that his name be printed in the minutes for both Lynn and Maine, so he could retain his hold and standing at Lynn and return whenever he saw fit. This Asbury also agreed to, for the sake of peace, but even then Lee would not leave, but remained for several weeks, working and talking against Asbury and Cooper and accusing the latter of meddling and trying to undermine his influence with the New Englanders. Cooper finally became so exasperated that he had a talk with the recalcitrant brother, which he thus described in his Journal:

> Brother Lee and I had a plain conversation to-day, in which I was pretty plain to him. I gave him to know that I would not consent that the authority of conference should be trampled on by him. He appears to be resolved to oppose the regular government of the Church, and I am more and more satisfied that he wants only power and influence, and all would bend before him. He delights to exercise authority when and where he can, but he cannot bear to be ruled or governed. I wish to love and be united with him, and am resolved to strive after peace and fellowship, but I cannot be reconciled to have the rules and government of the Church trampled upon; no! not even by a brother, or even the warmest and best friend I have in the world. Friends are near and dear, but the connexion is nearer.[20]

To the great chagrin of the expectant Congregationalists and Baptists, the indefatigable labours of Cooper and his itinerants soon put the New England Methodists in a better frame of mind, and all was peace and love. Jesse Lee was considerably chastened by his encounter with Asbury and Cooper, and within a year was recalled from Maine and sent south on a preaching tour to oppose James O'Kelley, who was then luring Methodists into his new church in great numbers. The following year Lee was returned to New England as presiding elder, and Cooper was appointed to New York. He was there on May 1, and July 4, 1795, and left in his Journal interesting commentaries on the manners and customs of the metropolis:

> May 1, 1795. This is moving day in the city of York. Every May-day is a general moving among the tenants. It appears that near, or quite, one-fourth of the people move. If so (and some think more) well on or upon ten thousand move, taking them little and big; but I do not think quite so many move. However, it is wonderful to see the people moving; the streets all day swarmed with them. And many, I understand, cannot get houses to enter. Poor creatures! I do not know what they will do. Rents are at an amazing height. Small rooms rent for twenty or thirty pounds, and indifferent houses from sixty to one hundred pounds, such as formerly were only twenty or thirty pounds. And, after all, numbers cannot get them, there are so many people in the city. People from the country have come down, and from France, West Indies, Nova Scotia, England, Ireland, etc., have crowded this city wonderfully. Hundreds of new buildings are up, or going up. What were fields looks like a new city. . . .[21]
>
> July 4, 1795. This is the day of Independence, kept with great pomp in this town. The wickedness of the citizens is truly great on this day. Instead of reverencing the name of God for his providential delivering of our country, the people seem disposed to spend their time in licentiousness. Surely the sins of the people are enough to provoke the Lord to enter into judgment with us! [22]

Asbury had gone into New Hampshire on his second trip to New England on the heels of Jesse Lee and his army of itinerants; he now made his initial entry into Vermont, preaching on August 21, 1795, at the home of a Methodist settler near Bennington. " There are Deists, Universalists, etc.," he wrote, " and they all have something to say about religion. I have felt awful for this place and people; but God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. I felt my soul stayed upon God, although I am in heaviness through manifold temptations." He went from Vermont to New York, and then rode into New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, across the mountains into Tennessee, and so through the whole area of

Methodist domination, returning to Baltimore in October 1796, for the third general conference. There he met Dr. Coke, who had arrived in the United States in August, after missionary voyages to Ireland, Holland, and the West Indies. Asbury was so feeble at this gathering, and so obviously unfit to perform alone the multitudinous duties of his office, that Jesse Lee and others began a movement for the election of another bishop. Despite Asbury's protest, the conference voted to choose a colleague for him from the itinerancy, with equal rank and power. Lee and Francis Poythress were among the avowed candidates, but before the election could be held, Dr. Coke induced the preachers to postpone action. He was then closeted with Asbury for several hours, and when the conference again convened, submitted the following statement:

> I offer myself to my American brethren entirely to their service, all I am and have, with my talents and labours in every respect; without any mental reservations whatsoever, to labour among them, and to assist Bishop Asbury; not to station the preachers at any time when he is present; but to exercise all the episcopal duties when I hold a conference in his absence, and by his consent, and to visit the West Indies and France when there is an opening and I can be spared.[23]

Dr. Coke's offer, which was obviously inspired by Asbury, aroused a storm of opposition. Jesse Lee pointed out that there were several native preachers qualified to fill the office of bishop, and that unlike Dr. Coke they were well acquainted with the laws and rules by which civil and religious privileges in America were regulated. He protested against the acceptance of Dr. Coke on the ground that the Doctor was a "thoroughbred Englishman; and an entire stranger abroad in the country; that the deep-rooted prejudice against British oppression, which by our arduous Revolutionary struggle we had so recently thrown off, still hung heavily, and was operating powerfully upon the public mind; and that to select a high officer to govern our church from that distant and tyrannizing nation would, in his judgment, be a very impolitic step, and would tend to raise the suspicions and prejudices of the public against us as a Church." Lee also said that he frequently heard unfavourable comment because Asbury, also a native of England, remained at the head of the American Church, and that to "add another Englishman would operate materially against the best interests of the connexion."[24]

Lee was the best debater in the conference, and had a large following of preachers who sympathized with his episcopal ambitions. The discussion continued for two days, during which time Dr. Coke was excluded from the meeting-room. Victory was in sight for Lee when Asbury rose from the chair and with much feeling said: "If we reject him, it will be his ruin, for the British Conference will certainly hear of it, and it will sink him vastly in their estimation."[25] This argument was neither profound nor logical, but it was effective, for not even Lee wanted to ruin Dr. Coke. Asbury continued to draw a pathetic picture of Dr. Coke wandering forlornly about the earth with no place to lay his ecclesiastical head, and when the proposition was at length brought to a vote, not more than a dozen of the itinerants cast their ballots against "the little Doctor."

Asbury had thus again defeated Jesse Lee and checked his holy progress. The preachers apparently thought that Dr. Coke would now remain permanently in the United States and labour with and under the direction of Asbury, but in the following February, less than three months later, he sailed for England to preside over the British Conference, and Asbury was again alone in command of the American Church. Dr. Coke returned in November 1797, but left again after six months, and thereafter was never in this country longer than a few months at a time. Nor did he ever again enjoy the full confidence of the American itinerants.

5

While New England was writhing under the Methodist whip, and the settlers beyond the mountains were being goaded to religious frenzy by the zealous evangelists, Asbury was preparing to carry the Wesleyan banner to the farthest limits of white civilization, and implant Methodism in the thinly settled territories of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and the whole of the Northwest Territory, and across the Mississippi. He had yet to visit these sections, but he had sent missionaries into the country as fast as it was opened for settlement, and as the population increased after General Wayne's treaty with the Indians in 1795, he reinforced them with stationed preachers and evangelists, and formed the conquered domain into circuits and districts. The first scattering settlements in Ohio were formed about 1781, and six years later George Callanhan, a Methodist preacher who had been labouring in Virginia, rode through the wilderness to Carpenter's Station, in Jefferson County, where the settlers had erected a blockhouse. There he preached the first Methodist sermon in Ohio, while "fifteen or twenty hardy backwoodsmen, armed with rifles, tomahawks, and scalping-knives, stood on the outside of the assembly as protectors against an alarm." Francis Clark of Kentucky followed Callanhan into the territory in 1793, and preached at Fort Washington, now Cincinnati. In 1796 Dr. Edward Tiffin, a local Methodist preacher who became Ohio's first governor and later a United States senator, emigrated from Virginia to the Chillicothe settlement, where he practised medicine and preached every Sunday at Anthony Davenport's, twelve miles north of the town. There Dr. Tiffin organized the first Methodist society in the state. About the same time Asbury appointed James Smith as a missionary to the Ohio settlers, and in 1797 appeared Francis McCormick, the real father of Ohio Methodism, who organized the second society in the state at Milford, in Clermont County. In 1798 John Kobler, presiding elder of the Kentucky district and an important figure in the western revivals, organized the first Ohio circuit, which included the territory from Columbia up the Little Miami and Mad Rivers to Dayton, and then down the Big Miami to Cincinnati. In August 1800, Henry Smith began the construction of the first Methodist meeting-house on Scioto Brush Creek, in Rome County.

Methodism first appeared along the Mississippi River in 1785, when Captain Joseph Ogle, a local preacher, settled in St. Clair County, Illinois, and delivered an occasional sermon when he was not busy wresting a living from the wilderness and defending his property against the Indians. He wrote to Asbury that this territory would in time be thickly populated by souls requiring Methodist salvation, and Asbury, who had already remarked the stream of immigration gradually turning toward the Pacific, began to include the then far west in his evangelical schemes. He sent Joseph Lillard into Illinois in 1793, and Lillard formed the first Methodist society in the state, appointing Captain Ogle as class leader. Five years later John Clarke, who had withdrawn from the itinerancy because of opposition to the anti-slavery campaign, resumed preaching at Asbury's request and went into the Illinois settlements. He roamed a wide territory, and was the first man to preach west of the Mississippi. Hosea Riggs settled in Illinois about 1800, when the territory included in the present state had fewer than 250 inhabitants, and was the principal preacher until 1804, when Asbury sent Benjamin Young to form the first Illinois circuit.

Meanwhile a Methodist society had been organized in 1802 near Charleston, Clarke County, Indiana, by Nathan Robertson, and the following year a Methodist itinerant named Freeman made his way into the present state of Michigan and preached at Detroit. Nathan Bangs came down from Canada and travelled through this district for several months, and in 1803 William Mitchell organized a society in Detroit, the first church of any denomination in Michigan. John Clarke probably preached in Missouri during his wanderings along the Mississippi, but historically Methodism in that state began with the visit of Joseph Oglesby, who wrote that, in June 1805, he "reconnoitred the Missouri country to the extremity of the settlements, and had the pleasure of meeting Daniel Boone, the mighty hunter." Oglesby preached several sermons, but soon returned to Illinois, and the Missourians were bereft of Methodist salvation until late in 1806, when John Travis was appointed to the territory under the direction of Jesse Walker in command of the Illinois field. Walker himself went into Missouri in 1807, and became the giant of early Missouri Methodism, penetrating into all of the settled parts of the state and into northern Arkansas. Walker finally carried the fire into St. Louis, but it was not until 1820 that he dared invade that Romish capital.

Asbury continued to infiltrate this vast territory with Methodist preachers, selecting men of fanatical zeal who had convinced themselves that the greater their hardships and emotional torments, the brighter they would shine in the eyes of the Lord. The revival frenzy soon spread among the far western settlements, and the amazing exploits of the evangelists threw Asbury into a fury of holy joy. " I am happy to find the work of God is reviving to the westward," he wrote in 1804 to Daniel Hitt, then on an Ohio district. " God certainly has a controversy with this land. Many that will not be mended will be ended, or mended and ended both. America is the infant of divine Providence. He must begin to correct — He will correct us Himself; He will not let others do it. I make no doubt there is not a single spot but will feel in time (and turn) the rod of God. The sinners in the cities are not sinners above all the Galileans." Yet many of the preachers did not always conduct themselves in a holy manner. They engaged in land speculations, and as the value of their holdings increased, they decided that after all the Methodist heaven was not a particularly desirable place. So they apostatized, and refused to return to the Church despite Asbury's furious denunciations. " This place is cursed with apostate Methodist preachers," he wrote of a western town, " and unless they repent and go back to their work, God will curse them." His first biographer says that " in many instances this, alas! proved true. Some who had engaged in such speculations, and others who had become traders and merchants, failed and became hopelessly bankrupt in property and character." [26]

During the last few years of the eighteenth century Asbury devoted most of his energy to effecting strong Methodist organizations in the western settlements, for he had long realized that this territory would in time be the religious heart of America, and envisioned a vast Methodist empire beyond the Alleghenies. But he did not neglect other parts of the United States which, although more civilized, yet yearned for admission to the Methodist heaven. In 1799 he sent Tobias Gibson into the Natchez country in Mississippi, and in December of the same year another missionary organized the first Methodist society in Augusta, Georgia. From these two points the Methodist itinerants completed the conquest of the South, penetrating into Florida, Louisiana, and Alabama. Asbury was especially anxious to gain a foothold in Savannah, the scene of the early American troubles of John and Charles Wesley, and long noted for its antipathy to Methodism and to Asbury's schemes for the liberation of the slaves. "Oh!" Asbury wrote, "that I might command Savannah also!" He sent Hope Hull into the city in 1790, but after one sermon Hull was mobbed by the other Christians and driven away. Asbury himself preached there in 1793 and was not molested, although he had a scant audience. He rode twelve miles out of the city to see the ruins of George Whitefield's Orphan House, and recalled Whitefield's curse upon the man who might put the building to other than holy uses, a desecration which God prevented by burning it. "I reflect upon the present ruin of the Orphan House," wrote Asbury, "and taking a view of the money expended, the persons employed, the preachers sent over, I was led to inquire, where are they? And how has it sped? The earth, the Army, the Baptists, the Church, the Independents, have swallowed them all up at this windmill end of the continent. A wretched country this! — but there are souls, precious souls, worth worlds."[27] Three years after recording this impression of the Savannah district, he again tried to save the city, with Jonathan Jackson and Josiah Randle, but the Savannah Christians were still ferocious and drove them away also. John Garvin was permitted to preach several times in 1800, but it was not until 1806 that a Methodist preacher dared become a permanent resident of the town. Then Samuel Dunwody, answering a call for volunteers, taught school for a living and hired a small room in which he preached. His ministry, with aid from Jesse Lee the following year, paved the way for Methodist domination of Savannah, although a meeting-house was not erected until 1812.

In this period of Methodist entrance into the western and southern frontiers, the work was also pushed with great vigour and success in New England, and the Methodization of such important states as New York and Pennsylvania was nearing completion. Into the interior districts of these commonwealths Asbury sent some of his ablest itinerants, and by 1800 Pennsylvania and the up-state wilderness of New York were dotted with Wesleyan preaching houses, and the wailings of the Methodist prophets had been heard northward along the Hudson River valley beyond Albany, and throughout the Catskill and Adirondack regions.

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[1] Phoebus: *Beams of Light*, etc., p. 203.
[2] Strickland: *The Pioneer Bishop*, etc., p. 217.
[3] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 28.
[4] Ibid., p. 32.
[5] Ibid., pp. 36, 37.
[6] Phoebus: *Beams of Light*, etc., p. 199.
[7] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 69.
[8] Buckley: *Constitutional and Parliamentary History of M. E. Church*, p. 71.
[9] Ibid., p. 74.
[10] Ibid., p. 79.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 557.
[13] Strickland: *The Pioneer Bishop*, etc., pp. 232–234.
[14] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 439.
[15] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. II, p. 419.
[16] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 118.
[17] Strickland: *The Pioneer Bishop*, etc., p. 472.
[18] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 125.
[19] Phoebus: *Beams of Light*, etc., p. 169.
[20] Ibid., p. 172.
[21] Ibid., p. 206.
[22] Ibid., p. 212.
[23] Buckley: *Constitutional and Parliamentary History*, etc., p. 84.
[24] Ibid., p. 85.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Strickland: *The Pioneer Bishop*, etc., p. 348.
[27] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 181.

CHAPTER XI

Elijah and Elisha

I

FROM the welter of methodistic preaching, praying, and bickering in New England there presently arose two of the most renowned figures in American Methodism — the Rev. Lorenzo Dow and the Rev. Hezekiah Calvin Wooster. They were very gifted men and genuine magicians, and each deserves a place alongside the Rev. Benjamin Abbott as a shining jewel in the Wesleyan diadem. Sinners could not stand before their glittering eyes, shrieking denunciations and menacing gestures, and neither, sometimes, could their fellow itinerants; frequently the latter screamed in agony and fell flat as Dow or Wooster described in harrowing detail the torments which await the wicked in the realms of hell. One of the most memorable miracles of this type was performed by Wooster on a Canadian circuit, when his presiding elder, Darius Dunham, entered the meeting-house and found sinners falling right and left and having fits under the power of the preacher's magic. Dunham disapproved of the excitement, and immediately knelt before the pulpit and asked God to put a stop to it. Wooster ceased preaching and dropped to his knees also.

"Stop it, God! Stop it, God!" cried Dunham.

"Lord, bless Brother Dunham! Lord, bless Brother Dunham!" shouted Wooster.[1]

It has never been definitely ascertained whether Wooster possessed greater influence with the Almighty, or whether his prayer merely reached heaven first and was answered in the order of its receipt. But it is a fact that within a few minutes Dunham suddenly shrieked, toppled over on his face, and had a fit, and then lapsed into unconsciousness. He remained in that condition until the end of the service. Wooster let him lie in front of the pulpit and resumed his harangue. Not a sinner escaped.

Both Dow and Wooster received the commands of God and Jesus Christ in weird dreams, and Dow frequently talked to the ghost of John Wesley; they saw and conversed with angels and mingled with them on terms of equality, and were taught the proper method of circumventing the machinations of Satan. But occasionally the Devil caused them considerable annoyance. "Satan pursued me from place to place," wrote Dow. "Oh! How can people dispute there being a Devil? If they underwent as much from his buffetings as I do, they would dispute it no more. He throwing in his fiery darts, my mind is harassed like punching the body with forks and clubs." Dow once rode fifteen miles to meet Wooster, and recorded that the latter appeared "more like one from the eternal world than one of my fellow mortals." Dow told Wooster that he had convulsions, and described his trances and dreams, and Wooster advised him that the Lord was working on him and preparing to sanctify him.

When Wooster died, he left a fragment of paper with this outline of his life written upon it: "Born, May 20, 1771; convinced of sin, October 9, 1791; born again, December 1, 1791; sanctified, February 6, 1792." But it was almost a year after his sanctification before he began to preach. He was then accepted by the Methodists, ordained by Francis Asbury, and assigned to the Albany circuit. For two years he laboured in New York and New Jersey, and in 1796 volunteered with Samuel Coate for the Canadian circuits, where Methodism had been implanted by the descendents of Barbara Heck and Philip Embury and put on a solid foundation by Darius Dunham, Elijah Woolsey, and others. Coate was something of a dandy, although he was a powerful preacher and performed many wonders. He wore his hair in very long curls, and tied it up every night with his garters. In the morning he spent more than an hour combing and dressing his luxuriant locks. It was his custom to anoint them with bear's-grease. He could write the Lord's prayer on an English sixpence, or on his thumb-nail, and this accomplishment was accepted by the simple Canadians as evidence of supernatural power. After labouring with great zeal and success for fourteen years Coate left the Methodist connexion and became a merchant in Montreal. But he failed and went to England, where he achieved a masterpiece of penmanship, had it engraved at a cost of sixteen hundred pounds and then travelled all over the island selling it for two pounds a copy. He died in Europe.

Wooster travelled throughout the then settled parts of the Dominion for more than three years, performing many miracles and leaving torn and mangled sinners in his wake. His first recorded wonder-working occurred during a quarterly meeting in the Bay of Quinte circuit, when a profane man in the gallery began to interrupt the service with cuss words. Wooster paid no attention to him for some time, but finally quit speaking and stepped to the front of the altar. There was awesome silence in the church as the preacher raised his right hand to heaven and fixed the sinner with his glittering eye, and even the latter stopped his swearing and stared in amazement. Suddenly Wooster stamped vigourously with his foot, pointed a rigid finger at the man and shouted: " My God! Smite him! "

The swearer, according to a Methodist historian,[2] instantly fell as if he had been shot through the heart, and Wooster proceeded with his service. And there were no more interruptions.

Wooster contracted consumption in 1798, and lost his voice through excessive preaching and the ravages of the disease. However, he never lost his power. Until he died he utilized the same magical formula which had been so successful at the Bay of Quinte meeting, and his strange performances spread terror among the evil-doers. When his illness had reached its last stages and he could no longer preach, he would stand in the pulpit with clasped hands and upturned eye, and repeat over and over in a broken undertone: " Smite them, my Lord! My Lord, smite them! "[3]

And they were duly smitten; whenever Wooster thus performed, people fell all over the house, and the whole country-side heard their screams as they struggled in fits and convulsions.

2

Lorenzo Dow was born in Coventry, Tolland County, Connecticut, on October 16, 1777. He was the fifth of six children. The Dow family was very poor, and Lorenzo received no education whatever; he is said to have never read any book except the Bible; from which he developed a weird theology, incoherent and undefinable. There is considerable evidence that he had epilepsy; from childhood he was subject to spasms and convulsions, and recorded in his Journal that he frequently went into trances, when he would fall to the ground and tremble all over, unable to control or still the jerking of his legs and arms. He invariably had dreams while in this condition, and in some of them was conducted to hell and compelled to watch the devils poking and prodding the damned in the eternal fires; in others he went to heaven and saw God and the angelic host lolling amid the gold and diamond glories of the poor man's paradise; in still others John Wesley appeared and gave him instructions regarding his work as a Methodist preacher. He experienced the first of these trances when he was four years old, when he " suddenly fell into a muse about God, and heaven and hell, about which I had heard so much."

When he was twelve years old, Dow was over-heated while playing, and drank a large quantity of cold water. He became very ill, and less than a year later he developed an asthmatic disorder, which troubled him throughout the remainder of his life, so that he never could sleep in a bed with comfort. He wrote:

> Sometimes I could lie several nights together and sleep sound, and at others I had to sit up part or all night. At times I could not lie down for six or seven days together — but as yet did not consider that the hand of God was in all this. About this time I dreamed that I saw the prophet Nathan, in a large assembly of people, prophesying many things. I asked him how long I should live. Said he: " Until you are two-and-twenty." This dream was so imprinted in my mind that it caused many serious and painful hours at intervals.
>
> When past the age of thirteen years, and about the time

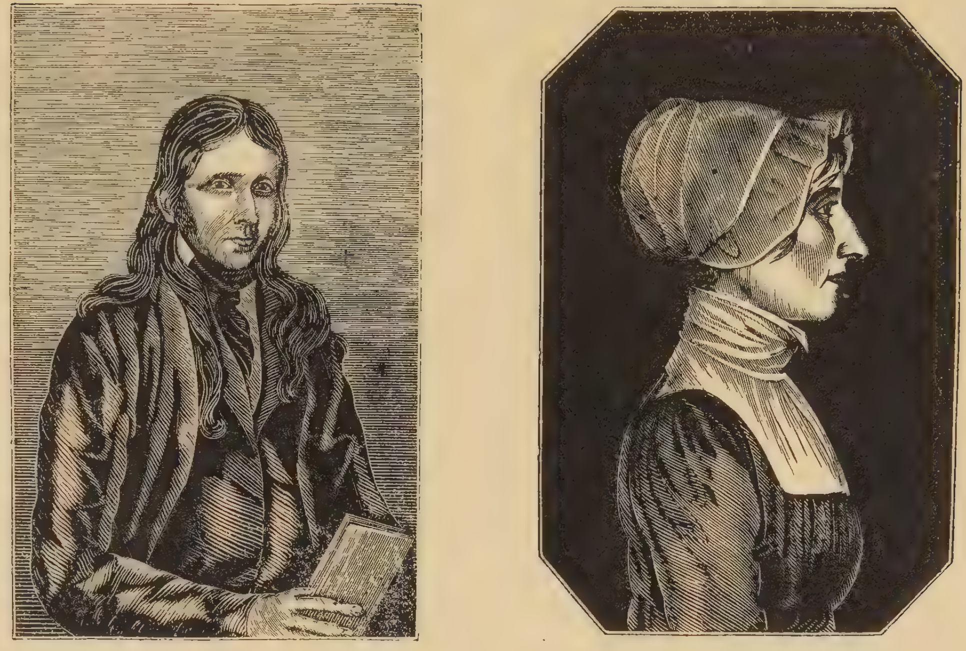
> that John Wesley died (1791), it pleased God to awaken my mind by a dream of the night, which was that an old man came to me at mid-day, having a staff in his hand, and said to me: " Do you ever pray?" I told him no. Said he: " You must," and then went away; he had not been long gone before he returned, and said again: " Do you pray?" I again said no; and after his departure I went out of doors and was taken up in a whirlwind above the skies. At length I saw, through a mist of darkness and across a gulf, a glorious place in which was a throne of ivory overlaid with gold, and God sitting upon it, and Jesus at his right hand, and angels and glorified spirits celebrating praise. I thought the angel Gabriel came to the verge of heaven with a trumpet in his right hand, and called to me with a loud voice to know if I desired to get there. I told him I did. Said he: " Return to earth, be faithful, and you shall come in the end." [4]

There was much talk of the Methodists in New England at this time; some held that they were the deceivers who, according to the Bible, are to come during the final days of the world, and that it was dangerous to hear them preach; others said they were a very good sort of people. Hope Hull preached in Coventry when Dow was about fourteen or fifteen years old, and so wrought upon the sick and excitable boy that for several days he could not sleep, nor attend to his chores; he wandered disconsolately in the woods, weeping and frightened. During this period he had several fits, and once while in a trance was chained by two devils who proposed to carry him to hell, but the Lord interposed and freed him. Some time afterward God said to him, " Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." He then began preaching and exhorting in public, and when word of this reached the Methodist circuit-riders, he was summoned to appear before C. Spry and exhibit his hortatory gifts. They were not satisfactory, and he was sent home. He tried again before Lawrence McCombs on the New London circuit, but after two days McCombs " constrained me to part from him."

Dow was greatly discouraged, and for some time roamed about moody and dejected, but early in 1796 Spry gave him three appointments and he preached at two of them. He attempted to reach the third meeting-place, but fell in a faint and was blind for several days. When he recovered, he rode forty miles to meet Nicholas Snethen, with whom he travelled for a few days, when Snethen also " constrained me to part from him." He now started for home but got lost in the forest, and was without food for several days. During this time he wept constantly, and prayed to the Lord to send angels and ravens with provisions, but apparently the Lord did not hear him. He was very ill when he arrived in Coventry, and that night dreamed that he sat in a strange house, dozing before the fire. A messenger came in, tapped him on the shoulder, and announced: " There are three ministers from England, and in a few minutes they will pass this way." Dow ran out to meet them, and presently they appeared from the west, riding one red and two white horses. One man dismounted and came towards him with kingly gait; the others disappeared. " I said to the first," Dow wrote, " 'Who are you?' He replied: 'John Wesley,' and walked toward the east; he turned around and, looking me in the face, said: 'God has called you to preach the Gospel; you have been a long time between hope and fear, but there is a dispensation of the Gospel committed to you. Woe unto you if you preach not the Gospel.' "[5]

When the Connecticut conference met in 1796, Dow attended and asked Francis Asbury for ordination and a license to preach, but Asbury had heard much of his eccentricities, which were extraordinary even for a Methodist, and told him he could not join the connexion. " This so affected me," wrote Dow, " that I could take no food for thirty-six hours." The next year Asbury permitted him to travel under the particular direction of the presiding elder, and Dow went through Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont, attracting much attention by his extraordinary appearance and the fervour of his preaching and prophesying. The 1798 conference was held at Granville, Connecticut, and Dow was again present, with certificates of good conduct from various local and itinerant preachers. These set forth that during the previous year

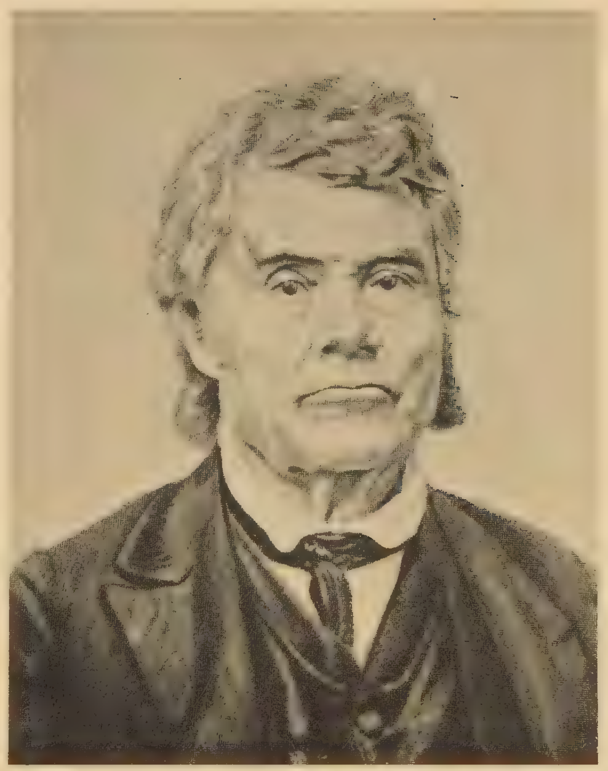
The Morning of Life is gone— *The Evening Shades appear!*



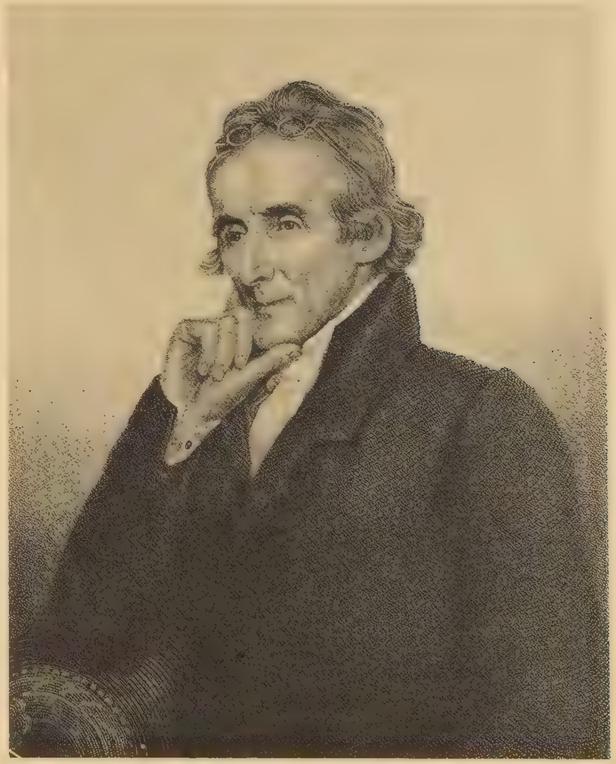
We're Journeying to that Land
LORENZO DOW—AGED 39—(1816.)

From whence there's no Return!
PEGGY DOW—AGED 35.

Frontispiece of Lorenzo Dow's "History of Cosmopolite"



Peter Cartwright



Ezekiel Cooper

Dow had done much good work for the Methodists, and had tormented many sinners into fits and other emotional explosions. Asbury thereupon agreed to admit Dow, and he became a full-fledged Methodist preacher.

But neither Asbury nor the presiding elder could confine Dow to the circuit to which he had been appointed. Inspired by his admission to the Methodist itinerancy and his elevation to full apostolic stature, Dow began a whirlwind round of preaching, prophesying and miracle-working, and his eccentricities increased to such an extent that he incurred the enmity of Snethen, Jesse Lee, and all the other Methodist itinerants who were labouring in New England; they shunted him from one to another and displayed much ill temper in their dealings with him. Dow accepted their rebuffs as proof that the Lord loved him and was torturing him to prove it, and became again a free-lance Methodist oracle. He travelled as he pleased, performing miracles with his glittering eyes and preaching whenever and wherever he could find an audience, the despised of the godly and the butt of the ungodly. He did not mince words in his discourses; he roared and damned everybody and everything, and knocked sinners right and left, and frequently shocked his congregations by preaching vigourously from the pornographic and sadistic portions of the Bible. " The country seems to be in an uproar," he wrote, " and I was mostly known by the name of Crazy Dow." [6]

Most of the Methodist preachers acquired great renown for the singularity of their appearance, but Dow was the most singular of them all. Like the great Elijah, whose life he closely followed, he was " an hairy man," unshaven and unshorn; he let his hair and whiskers grow until the former fell below his shoulders and the latter reached almost to his waist, and from this matted and unkempt mass of hirsute foliage gleamed his glittering eyes, before which no sinner could stand without flinching. He was naturally tall and thin, and he went without food and sleep until he was emaciated and cadaverous; he wore torn and shabby clothing in imitation of the old sacks with which Elijah draped his person, and was often hatless and shoeless; he knew little of the mysteries of the bath. When he acquired any money, which was seldom, someone quickly swindled him, and when he occasionally obtained a horse, it was a spavined, mis-shapen brute which could scarcely totter along the highway. He continually trusted that the Lord would send angels and ravens to feed him, and in consequence often begged his food from door to door; it has been said that he followed the example of John the Baptist and ate grasshoppers, although he drew the line at the holy diet of the prophet Ezekiel.[7]

When Dow appeared at the door of a farm-house and asked for something to eat he always requested a crust of bread, and would accept nothing more. It was his custom to kneel before knocking, and the spectacle that greeted the startled housewife was that of a gaunt, hairy gentleman kneeling with his hands clasped and his glittering eyes turned toward heaven, and crying: "A crust! A crust for a Methodist preacher!"

There was always a pump or a spring in the back yard, and thither Dow tottered with his crust, and drew a bucket of water. Kneeling, he dipped his bread and, holding it high in the air, drew a hymn-book from his pocket and bellowed a holy song. He then prayed and afterwards ate the crust. When the last morsel had been swallowed, he sang another hymn, staggered to his horse, and went off down the road, singing and shouting.

Bishop Asbury appointed Dow to the Essex circuit in Vermont in 1799, with instruction to work a few of his miracles on the ninety thousand sinners in that state and save some of them for the Methodists, but Dow had not been there long before he had another of his numerous conversations with God, who told him to go to Ireland and rescue the Irish from the clutches of the pope. Dow had no money, no bedding, no food, and no clothing, but he promptly embarked in a leaky canoe and set out down the Mussissque River, hoisting a shrub for a sail. He reached St. John's in a few days, and obtained passage there on a boat bound to Montreal, and finally boarded a vessel which was preparing to sail for Europe. Being twenty-two years old on the day the boat slipped her moorings, he lay down on deck to die, recalling that the prophet Nathan had once told him he would expire at that age. However, the prophet was mistaken. When night came Dow scrambled to his feet and went foraging for food, but unluckily wandered among the sailors, who put tar on his face and tallow on his clothing, and continued to make sport of him throughout the voyage.

The ship landed at Larne, in the north of Ireland, on the 26th day of November, and after devious wanderings among the amazed Irish Dow arrived in Dublin. He spent nearly a year in Ireland, walking from one end of the island to the other, preaching and fighting the Catholic demons which he was convinced the pope had let loose upon him. However, he overcame them and, wherever he went, added recruits to the feeble Methodist societies which were struggling to make progress against the love of the Irish for the pomp and pageantry of Rome. And in almost every town he left delightful bickerings in his wake, and the Wesleyans were at each other's throats from Dublin to Belfast. Once when he was in the latter city, the Lord told him to hasten to the south, and he took passage on a boat. A storm came up, and the ship was driven into the Bay of Ramsey, on the Isle of Man. The sailors devoured Dow's provisions, and he went without food for eighty hours. The vessel finally made port, and Dow went ashore and began to preach. "The vessel attempted to sail out unknown to me," he wrote, "but broke her anchor against the quay, which detained her another tide, so I did not lose my passage. And the captain, who said I was either a witch, or a wizard, or a devil, or something, and that if it had not been for me he would have had a good passage; and before he would take me again I should pay five pounds." Once in Ireland again Dow fell sick of smallpox and was in bed for several weeks.

When Dow returned to the United States, Asbury sent him into the Dutchess and Columbia circuits in New York, but he soon felt the urge to wander. During the next fifteen years he was constantly on the move; in extent and variety his travels have been equalled by no preacher save Francis Asbury, and even Asbury did not attract the attention that fell to Dow's lot. He became known everywhere as a fortune-teller, a seer, and a miracle-worker; he predicted calamities, births, deaths, and illnesses and interpreted dreams, including hundreds of his own, for a night seldom passed that he did not awaken in the horrors of a nightmare. He was escorted into all the different hells and heavens that the imagination of a sick man could conjure. The infernal regions, naturally enough, were horrible, but the heavens were beautiful, constructed of gold and silver and pearl and jasper, " where there is no sorrow, nor pain, neither frost nor chilling winds, but all is delight and tranquillity, and the inhabitants have pleasure for evermore."

Dow penetrated into all of the frontier settlements, and was a prominent figure in the great camp-meeting revivals which shook the West and South and kept those sections in an uproar for many years. Few of the other evangelists could so graphically describe the hellish horrors and the heavenly wonders, and few could so quickly inspire the converts to the jerks, barks, dancing, and holy fits; a few minutes of Dow's preaching was sufficient to transform a congregation of staid settlers into a mob of screaming, trembling maniacs grovelling in an agony of fever. To Dow goes the distinction of having preached the first Protestant sermon in the State of Alabama, and probably in Florida also, for he toured the west coast of the latter state in 1803, while on a visit to the Natchez district of Mississippi. He crossed the Tombigbee River into Alabama, and preached in the settlements along the Tensaw, Chattahoochee, and Alabama Rivers, and in several Clay County hamlets, about sixty miles from Montgomery. When he returned to New England from this trip, he married Peggy, the sister-in-law and adopted daughter of Smith Miller of Weston, Connecticut. Her temperament was very similar to his own; she thought of little else than religion, and like Dow was subject to trances and hallucinations, and was in every respect an ideal mate. In later years she accompanied him on his travels, and left a record of her experiences in a literary work called *Vicissitudes, or the Journey of Life,* much of which is incoherent. In his own Journals Dow referred to her as " My Rib."

Francis Asbury suspected that Dow was something more than a border-line case of insanity, and did not look with favour upon his labours in the East. But he made little attempt to interfere with the miracle-worker; on the contrary, he utilized Dow's services in opening up new territory for the Methodists, and encouraged him to go into the frontier districts, where he was accepted and venerated as a veritable prophet of the Lord. But other Methodist preachers throughout the connexion became increasingly annoyed at Dow's eccentricities of speech and manner, and when word got about in 1805 that he contemplated another trip to Europe, Nicholas Snethen wrote an open letter warning the English Methodists against him, and denouncing him as a shameless intruder and a most daring imposter. "His manners have been clownish in the extreme," wrote Snethen, "and his habit and appearance more filthy than a savage Indian; his public discourses a mere rhapsody, the substance often an insult upon the Gospel. . . . He has affected a recognizance of the secrets of men's hearts and lives, and even assumed the awful prerogative of prescience, and this not occasionally, but as it were habitually, pretending to foretell, in a great number of instances, the deaths and calamities of persons, etc." [8]

Nevertheless Dow returned to Europe, accompanied by his wife, whose eccentricities had made her little less famous than her husband. He preached in Ireland, and then went to England, where he established the Methodist system of camp-meetings and caused a terrific row to develop in the English connexion. The regular Wesleyans denounced Dow and his adherents as fanatics, and declared that the camp-meetings and noisy revivals conducted by the American were an insult to God. They refused to permit them to be held, but a large group approved them and broke away from the regular society organization. They called themselves Primitive Methodists and went in whole-heartedly for every sort of emotional excess they could hear of or invent. With these people Dow became very popular, for he lashed them with his evangelistic whip until they were frenzied, and jerked, barked, and danced with great vigour.

Dr. Coke snubbed Dow when the American met him at a London meeting and rushed forward with glad cries to embrace him, and repeated the slight a few weeks later at the Dublin conference. From the Dublin gathering Dow started on a whirlwind tour of Ireland, and aroused great excitement throughout the island by his miracles and the fiery manner of his preaching. He preached against the Catholics, denouncing the Jesuits as sons of Satan and enemies of the true God, and had many clashes with Catholic priests. In one south-of-Ireland town half a dozen priests armed with whips and clubs descended upon Dow's congregation and drove the people out of the meeting-house and down the road to the Catholic church, where prayers were offered for them and God was invited to send Dow either to hell or back to America. In Dublin Catholic mobs assaulted Dow, throwing stones at him, and otherwise mistreating him. But Dow survived the beatings; it was his custom, when opposers laid the lash on his back, to draw a hymn-book from his pocket and sing lustily as the blows fell, and at the conclusion of the attack to kneel and thank God for giving him such trials to bear. Naturally, persecuting a man who enjoyed it soon lost much of its charm.

Peggy Dow remained in London to give birth to a child while Dow went to Ireland, but the baby soon died of exposure and a disease contracted from being nursed by a sick mother, and the Dows returned to America. With Peggy by his side Dow then resumed his travels, and his meteoric dashes from New Orleans to the tip of Maine, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the limits of the frontier became the sensation of the country. When he did not have a horse, he walked, and the more he travelled and preached, the more unbalanced and fanatical he became, until at last he was as raving mad as any of the great prophets of Scriptures, and roamed up and down the land moaning, groaning, crying, and wailing for heaven and the celestial glories and comforts. While in Europe, he became subject to "spasms of an extraordinary kind, which baffled the skill of the most celebrated of the faculty," and contracted other diseases as well. After his return to America his fits became more frequent, and he often fell in the pulpit in the midst of a sermon, and lay screeching and twisting in agony. But this was generally regarded as an exceptionally notable sign of the working of the Holy Spirit, and he was regarded with awe. During one of his trips into Alabama he was so ill that he retired into the cane-brake, convinced that he was going to die. He constructed a shelter of split poles and shrubs, and there lay down to " wait and see what God the Lord would do." He felt better after a few days, and began to hack a path through the cane. While thus engaged he met three wolves, but he quoted Biblical passages to them, chinked his tin boxes together, and sang a hymn, and the wolves parted, two going to the right and one to the left. The magician passed between them, and the beasts did not molest him, although they followed him to the home of a friend.[9] But once he entered the house they returned to the brake, and all that night howled dismally.

Dow went into the new territory of Missouri early in 1811, and found so much wickedness among the inhabitants that he predicted a direful happening at the hands of God. Less than a year later his prophecy was fulfilled by the great earthquakes which affected almost the entire valley of the Mississippi. The disturbance centred round New Madrid, Missouri, and was probably the greatest upheaval in the history of the United States, although the loss of life was small. At the time he uttered his prophecy, Dow commanded one of his disciples, Eliza Bryan, to send him an account of the event after it had occurred, and in his Journal he preserves her letter, which contains one of the few accounts of the disaster:

> NEW MADRID, TERRITORY OF MISSOURI,
> March 22, 1816.
>
> DEAR SIR:
>
> In compliance with your request, I will now give you a history, as full in detail as the limits of a letter will permit, of the late awful visitation of Providence in this place and its vicinity.
>
> On the 16th of December, 1811, about two o'clock A.M., we were visited by a violent shock of an earthquake, accom-

panied by a very awful noise resembling loud but distant thunder, but more hoarse and vibrating, which was followed in a few minutes by the complete saturation of the atmosphere with sulphurous vapour, causing total darkness. The screams of the affrighted inhabitants running to and fro, not knowing where to go, or what to do — the cries of the fowls and beasts of every species — the cracking of trees falling, and the roaring of the Mississippi — the current of which was retrograde for a few moments, owing, as is supposed, to an irruption in its bed — formed a scene truly horrible. From that time until about sunrise a number of lighter shocks occurred; at which time one still more violent than the first took place, with the same accompaniments as the first, and the terror which had been excited in everyone, and indeed in all animals, was if possible, doubled. . . .

There were several shocks of a day, but lighter than those already mentioned until the 23rd of January, 1812, when one occurred as violent as the severest of the former ones, accompanied by the same phenomena as the former. From this time until the 4th of February the earth was in continual agitation, visibly waving as a gentle sea. On that day there was another shock, nearly as hard as the preceding ones. Next day four such, and on the 7th about four o'clock A.M., a concussion took place so much more violent than those which had preceded it, that it was denominated the hard shock. The awful darkness of the atmosphere, which as formerly was saturated with sulphurous vapour, and the violence of the tempestuous thundering noise that accompanied it, together with all the other phenomena mentioned as accompanying the former ones, formed a scene the description of which would require the most sublimely fanciful imagination. At first the Mississippi seemed to recede from its banks, and its waters gathering up like a mountain, leaving for a moment many boats, which were here on their way to New Orleans, on the bare sand, in which time the poor sailors made their escape from them. It then rising fifteen or twenty feet perpendicularly, and expanding, as it were, the same moment, the banks were overflowed with a retrograde current, rapid as a torrent — the boats which before had been left on the sand were now torn from their moorings, and suddenly driven up a little creek, at the mouth of which they laid, to the distance in some instances of nearly a quarter of a mile.

The river, falling immediately as rapid as it had risen, receded within its banks again with such violence that it took with it whole groves of young cottonwood trees, which ledged its borders. They were broken off with such regularity, in some instances, that persons who had not witnessed the fact would be difficultly persuaded that it has not been the work of art. A great many fish were left on the banks, being unable to keep pace with the water. The river was literally covered with the wrecks of boats, and 'tis said that one was wrecked in which there was a lady and six children, all of whom were lost. In all the hard shocks mentioned, the earth was horribly torn to pieces — the surface of hundreds of acres was, from time to time, covered over, of various depths, by the sand which issued from the fissures, which were made up in great numbers all over this country, some of which closed up immediately after they had vomited forth their sand and water, which, it must be remarked, was the matter generally thrown up.

In some places, however, there was a substance resembling coal, or impure stone-coal, thrown up with the sand. It is impossible to say what the depth of the fissures or irregular breaks were; we have reason to believe that some of them are very deep. The site of this town was evidently settled down at least fifteen feet, and not more than half a mile below the town there does not appear to be any alteration on the bank of the river, but back from the river a small distance the numerous large ponds or lakes, as they were called, which covered a great part of the country, were nearly dried up. The beds of some of them are elevated above their former banks several feet, producing an alteration of ten, fifteen, to twenty feet, from their original state. And lately it has been discovered that a lake was formed on the opposite side of the Mississippi, in the Indian country, upwards of one hundred miles in length, and from one to six miles in width, of the depth of from ten to fifty feet. It has communication with the river at both ends, and it is conjectured that it will not be many years before the principal part, if not the whole of the Mississippi, will pass that way. . . . We have, since their commencement in 1811, and still continue to feel, slight shocks occasionally. It is seldom indeed that we are more than a week without feeling one, and sometimes three and four, in a day. . . .

Your Humble Servant,
ELIZA BRYAN.

There is one circumstance which I think worthy of remark. This country was formerly subject to very hard thunder; but for more than a twelve month before the commencement of the earthquake there was none at all, and but very little since, a great part of which resembles subterranean thunder. The shocks still continue, but are growing more light, and less frequent.—E. B.[10]

Peggy Dow died in 1820, and thereafter her husband, although he continued to travel and preach, considerably abated his evangelistic fury and in time was forgotten. On February 2, 1834, in Georgetown, Maryland, he died, a lonely, mad old man.

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[1] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. III, p. 199.

[2] Bangs: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. II, p. 74.

[3] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. III, p. 204.

[4] Dow: *History of Cosmopolite, or Lorenzo's Journal*, etc., p. 10.

[5] Ibid., p. 27.

[6] Ibid., p. 46.

[7] Holy Bible; Ezekiel IV. 15.

[8] Dow: *History of Cosmopolite*, etc., p. 719.

[9] Ibid., p. 310.

[10] Ibid., p. 344, et seq.

CHAPTER XII

Pentecost

I

WHEN Dr. Coke returned to England soon after the organization conference in Baltimore, and there was no one to interfere or question his authority, Asbury began to manipulate the Methodist itinerancy as a military strategist manipulates his troops. Selecting a definite objective, generally a newly-settled area in which there were a few families with methodistic leanings, he infiltrated the territory with official missionaries, who encouraged the Methodist men to become local preachers and exhorters, and began the preliminary organization of Methodist societies. Soon afterward, especially if the people were backward about showing enthusiasm for the Wesleyan plan, Asbury himself entered to stir them up and aroused comment by his presence. This had a very depressive effect upon the morale of the sinners, for Asbury and his itinerants professed loud and righteous indignation at such wicked goings-on as card-playing, dancing and horse-racing, and proclaimed a jihad against all who would not exchange these Satanic pastimes for the pious wranglings of Christianity. When the evil ones had been tormented to the required state of fear and uneasiness, Asbury flooded the area with preachers noted for their evangelistic ferocity and their miracles of conversion. These were the shock troops; they bore the brunt of the attack and charged valiantly into the jaws of Satan. Their frenzy and disregard of hardship became proverbial; in the frontier settlements beyond the Alleghenies a saying arose describing the worst conceivable weather: " There is nobody out to-day but crows and Methodist preachers." After these prophets had thrown the whole territory into an uproar of religious fury, they were relieved by preachers who possessed organizing and administrative abilities. These were the mopping-up troops; they consolidated the holy positions which had been won, settled the societies, encouraged the building of chapels, put the area under Methodist law, and prepared it for acceptance by the conferences as an organized circuit and a working unit of the Church.

The result of this system was that revivals were soon in progress throughout the country, but especially in the South and along the edges of the wilderness. The first of the great series began in Brunswick County, Virginia, about the middle of 1787. This district had always been a hotbed of piety; it had experienced a notable revival under the ministry of Dr. Jarratt and Robert Williams just before the Revolution, and another under George Shadford and Asbury, which continued until the former departed for England, and Asbury went into seclusion in Delaware. It probably contained more Methodists than any other county in the state. But it was also the abode of many sinners, some of whom were very obnoxious. The holy work began with a small gathering in Petersburg, and from there spread throughout Brunswick, and into Sussex and other circuits. More than a hundred were converted, after great travail, at a two-day meeting in Mabry's Chapel, Brunswick, during the latter part of July, and many of the rescued rode into Sussex circuit early the next week for a great service in Jones's Chapel, where they again thrilled to their emotional agonies. This was a very uproarious gathering. Hundreds did not wait for the preachers to arrive and depict the magnificence of heaven and the horrors of hell, but began to weep and shout as soon as they reached the chapel. Many could not enter for a considerable period, but stood outside and trembled so violently at the mere sight of the temple that their hats were shaken from their heads. The screaming and groaning could be heard a half-mile away, and when the preachers got there, they found the whole congregation on its several knees. However, in a few minutes scores fainted, fell over, and had fits.

The preachers went among them, praying, exhorting, shouting that God was present, prodding, and tormenting. " Some were lying and struggling as if they were in the agonies of death," wrote a Methodist historian. " Others lay as if they were dead. Hundreds of the believers in the power of God were so overcome that they fell down and lay helpless on the ground or on the floor; and some of them continued in that helpless condition for a considerable time. . . . While the society was collected in the house, some of the preachers went into the woods to preach, and while they were preaching, the power of the Lord was felt among the people in such a manner that they roared and screamed so loud that the preacher could not be heard, and he was compelled to stop. Many scores of both white and black people fell to the earth, and some of them lay in the deepest distress until the evening."[1]

The frenzy was no respecter of persons; it attacked both the rich and the poor. Many of the wealthiest and most fashionable residents of the district were soon sweating and rolling on the ground in their fine silks and broadcloths, grovelling in the dirt and crying their fear of the loving God. A few days later another great meeting was held in Jones's Hole Church, and again the howling and lamenting were so loud that the preachers could not be heard. However, they could make signs, and from all parts of the church and the adjoining woods rose groans, grunts, and shrieks as the sinners struggled against the magical powers. Some of the stricken crept aimlessly about on their hands and knees, weeping and wailing; others were held unconscious in the arms of their friends; others were stretched on the floor or the ground, as stiff as so many sticks; others foamed at the mouth and writhed in fits and convulsions, their arms and legs twitching spasmodically; others stood still and uttered blood-curdling shrieks. Still others went dancing about inviting each other to go to heaven with them; two noted converts became involved in a bitter argument as to who should precede whom through the gates of paradise. At the height of the orgy the sleepers of the church gave way, and the side wall collapsed. Several persons were hit by bricks and falling timbers, but they paid no attention to the accident; it merely brought on fresh outbursts of frenzy, and the congregation accepted it as an awesome sign of the presence and powers of God. One man went prancing through the church screaming pridefully that God had hit him personally with a brick.

This boiling over of the emotional pot occurred not only during the regular meetings, but at other times and under other circumstances. It was not uncommon for a man at work in the fields of this part of Virginia to be suddenly afflicted by twitchings, grunts, and other divine signs, whereupon he would shout and begin to pray and sing hymns. Other workmen would join him, and the fields would soon be filled with shouting, dancing, weeping, cavorting converts. The inhabitants of several villages were brought into the Methodist fold *en masse,* and abandoned all secular employment to sing and have fits until hunger drove them back to work. The revival continued in southern Virginia throughout the summer, and a count undertaken by Asbury and other Methodist leaders showed that during this period there had been about 3,500 conversions. In Brunswick alone 1,800 got religion, in Sussex 1,600, and 900 in Amelia. The number who retained it was not recorded.

News of this working of the Spirit in Virginia soon penetrated to the north and east, and since such excitements are always contagious, Asbury's evangelists stoked many such holy conflagrations during the next two or three years. But the next revival of real importance occurred in Baltimore in 1789. Baltimore had always been Asbury's favourite city, and in this year he proudly recorded that it held more Methodists than any other place on the continent. At the Philadelphia conference of September 1789, the town reported 1,209 members of the church, with twenty-three preaching places in and about the city. Nelson Reed was sent to the district as presiding elder, and Ezekiel Cooper, Francis Spry, and James Hagarty were assigned to Baltimore and adjacent circuits.

Cooper and Spry took command of the city and contiguous territory, and finding the people alarmed over the prevalence of smallpox, immediately added to their fears by typical methodistic preaching, thundering forth warnings and intimating that the Lord was preparing to take vengeance upon Baltimore and its inhabitants. In February 1789 this bore fruit in a hysterical outbreak at Fell's Point, where forty were converted at a watch-night service over which Nelson Reed presided. Meetings were then held every night for more than a month, and the emotional excesses constantly increased in volume and variety. Scores who regarded Methodism as the boil of civilization attended for no other purpose than to watch the writhing sinners, and were themselves cast to the floor by the magic. One night during this early period of the revival more than four thousand persons filled the church in Light Street and jammed the streets near it, and each day the preaching and singing continued until long after midnight. In less than a month more than a hundred men and women had joined the Methodist society, and hundreds of others were teetering on the brink.

The fury abated somewhat during June and July, but was renewed with redoubled vigour early in August. On the morning of August 10 Ezekiel Cooper was summoned to the home of W. Buchanan, where he found a daughter of the household labouring under great distress of mind; many believed that she was possessed of a devil. She lay pensively in the arms of a sister who had only recently been converted, moaning faintly. "She had slept none all night," wrote Cooper, "but spent the hours mourning and sobbing. My heart was sensibly touched at her situation; her sorrow was truly penitential. I exhorted her to believe, and with confidence to venture her all upon Christ; I strove to press on her mind the all-fullness which dwells in Jesus, and His willingness that she should receive out of that fullness peace and pardon. I sung and prayed twice, and pointed her again to a bleeding Saviour." [2]

But it was noon before the spell succeeded, and Miss Buchanan, realizing that she had religion, leaped to her feet with a whoop. Meanwhile her family and scores of her friends had hovered over her, and there was a mighty shout when she suddenly screamed that she saw heaven and God and Jesus Christ and all the angels, prophets, slaves, etc. Her cry was heard a great distance, and the report spread that the Buchanan home was on fire. The fire-bell was rung and people came running from all parts of the city. When they reached the house, they found the Buchanans and their friends leaning out of windows and running about the premises shouting that the daughter had been converted and that everybody was seeing God. Miss Buchanan's nine-year-old sister, identified by Cooper as "Little P. B.," ran hither and yon, upstairs and down, shrieking and laughing hysterically. She finally climbed upon the porch railing, and amid gales of laughter screamed: "Oh, how merry I am! Sister is happy! Sister is happy! I got happy on Sunday and Sister on Monday!"[3]

The crowd attracted by the conversion of Miss Buchanan was so large that half the people could not get into the house; many climbed on piles of stove wood and peered into the windows, and yelled encouragingly when they saw the young woman sitting in a chair, her body shaking with convulsive laughter while she clasped her hands and shrilly described what she was seeing, which was a great deal. She was finally exhausted and the excitement subsided. However, before the crowd dispersed, a report was received that similar miracles were being performed at the home of N. Jones, where a group of sorrowing Methodists had gathered at ten o'clock in the morning for prayer. Thither the crowd sped, and soon the Jones house was filled with shrieking converts and marvelling spectators. Preachers arrived and began to exhort, and the mob continued to come and go between the Buchanan and Jones houses all day. When dusk fell, Cooper mounted a table in the street and preached to a crowd that constantly grew larger and more hysterical. "It was, in truth," he wrote, "a most awful scene."

Night came on, finally, and Cooper got down from his table and announced that the services would be continued in the church. Singing and shouting, he started through the streets. Scores of wailing mourners followed, but many were unable to go more than a block before they fainted; their friends then picked them up in their arms and plodded on. Crowds that packed the streets paraded behind the preacher and the hysterical converts, and within a little while all Baltimore was in an uproar. In widely scattered sections men and women suddenly ran screaming from their houses and began dancing and prancing in holy glee up and down the thoroughfares. Presently other processions formed, and all converged upon the Methodist church with great shouting, singing, and laughing. They filled the church and jammed the streets near it, and until two o'clock in the morning the work went on; the building became an emotional shambles. Every available preacher throughout the district was rushed into Baltimore and hurried to the church, and with the aid of experienced Methodists who had been through the same thing years before and had become hardened to such outbreaks, pushed and prodded the sinners until they admitted their wickedness and began to laugh and scream, or display other accepted signs of religion. The next day a crowd gathered at a Methodist home, and the service begun there continued without interruption for more than fourteen hours, ending only when everyone was exhausted. During this stretch of some thirty hours the preachers neither ate nor slept, and some of them preached with such vehemence that they lost their voices. The effect on the citizens of Baltimore was tremendous. " Religion had now become the common topic of conversation," wrote the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper. " You could scarcely enter a shop, walk the street or market, but that you heard people on the subject of our shouting meetings, and the numerous conversions among us. A panic had seized upon numbers, who did not know what to be at or do; some railed, others were afraid, while others approved of what had passed among us. It was the cry of some, ' The Methodists at this rate will get all the people.' "[4]

2

Revivals such as these continued among the southern Methodists almost without cessation for the next ten years, and broke out intermittently in the middle states and the North, not even New England escaping the cleansing bath of holy fire. The Presbyterians, Baptists, and other evangelical sects caught the fever, and throughout the United States there was a great increase of religious sentiment, which was climaxed by the Concert of Prayer in 1795, when the various denominations set aside the first Tuesday in each quarter and asked all their communicants to pray to God on those days for an outpouring of the Spirit upon the world. In 1796 the excitement swept westward into the Cumberland district of Kentucky, and then spread into Tennessee and northward through the Ohio and Allegheny valleys, culminating in the great revivals of 1797–1805, when camp-meetings first came into general use, and almost the entire population of the territory west of the mountains abandoned itself to emotional orgies and wild physical excesses. These were the most extensive outbreaks of religious fervour the United States had ever experienced, and were the natural flowering of Francis Asbury's plan for the evangelization of the continent. In some sections the Presbyterians and the Baptists were numerically superior, and their preachers originated and dominated the meetings, but the groundwork for them was laid by Asbury and the Methodist itinerancy, and the plan and form were purely methodistic. And it was the Methodist preacher who performed the most astounding miracles, and under whose preaching the most extraordinary emotional and physical phenomena occurred. Eventually the Presbyterians objected to the orgiastic character of the revivals and withdrew from official participation, and thereafter they were almost exclusively Methodist triumphs. However, large bodies of Presbyterian schismatics continued to assist under the leadership of such preachers as Richard McNemar, John Thompson, Robert Marshall, John Dunlevy, and the celebrated Elder Barton W. Stone. This group seceded and formed the Springfield Presbytery after some of them had been placed on trial by the Presbyterian authorities for failing to preach Calvinism.[5] Later their followers called themselves the New Light and then the Christian Church, and upheld doctrines somewhat similar to those propounded by James O'Kelley and his seceders from the Methodist organization.

The million or more people who lived along America's frontier were particularly susceptible to methodistic preaching, for the living conditions which twenty years before had contributed to the success of Methodism in the East and South prevailed throughout the territory, and existence was even harder and rougher. And there was a greater dearth of intellectual life. For the most part the homes of the settlers were rude shacks or log-cabins, and the only reading matter available was religious literature distributed by the preachers and comprising such works as *Pilgrim's Progress,* Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,* and Young's *Night Thoughts.* And, of course, every household had a Bible, and a hymnal containing the bloody songs of Isaac Watts. The schools were generally opened and closed with scripture readings and prayer, and in many of them the Bible was used as a text-book on science, history, and geography, as well as on holy living. There was a religious atmosphere about almost every home in the vast territory, but there was little real religion. On the contrary, there was wide-spread immorality, gambling, and intemperance, and as the land was rich and required but little labour the people had much time for sin. In 1797 Asbury wrote:

> I am of the opinion that it is as hard or harder for the people of the West to gain religion as any other. When I consider where they came from, where they are, and how they are, and how they are called to go farther, their being unsettled with so many objects to take their attention, with the health and good air they enjoy, and when I reflect that not one in a hundred came here to get religion; but rather to get plenty of good land, I think it will be well if some or many do not eventually lose their souls.[6]

Social intercourse in the western territory was for the most part confined to the towns, and reached its peak on court days, when the whole country-side rode or drove to the nearest hamlet. The settlements consisted generally of a meeting-house, a jail and court-house combined, a store, and a few log-cabins, and in some of the outlying districts were surrounded by stockades as protection against the Indians and the wild beasts. None of the great cities of Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, and western Pennsylvania had arisen, and the major portion of the population was on the farms. Even Pittsburgh had but 1,565 inhabitants in 1800, and Lexington, Kentucky, with 1,797, was the metropolis of a large area. Nashville could boast but 355 people, including 141 slaves, and Frankfort's population was 368 whites and 260 blacks. In this territory, from the southern border of Tennessee northward to the Ohio River and beyond Pittsburgh, the Methodists were organized in some twenty-seven circuits, with about 3,000 members, but with direct influence upon many times that number.

The Methodist itinerants, inspired by the example of their brethren in Virginia, Maryland, and the middle states, held revivals in 1796 and early in 1797 throughout the Cumberland and Holston districts, but the first of pentecostal extent was conducted by the Rev. James McGready, a Presbyterian minister who was one of the central figures throughout the excitement. McGready was pastor of the churches at Gasper River, Red River, and Muddy River, in Logan County, Kentucky, and started the uproar by binding his congregations to a solemn covenant to offer a special prayer each Saturday evening, each Sunday morning, and all day on the third Saturday of every month, for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the world in general and Logan County in particular. The Lord responded, as always, and reports of the furore in Logan County soon spread eastward and northward, and there was a general quickening throughout the West. In the revivals of every sect there was now a gradual gain in attendance and an increase in fervour, but as yet there had been only isolated instances of the wild excesses which became epidemic with the introduction of camp-meetings.

No one factor contributed more to the success of the great western revivals than these holy revels. Their origin has always been in dispute, and probably will remain so. Meetings similar in many respects were held by the Virginia Baptists during the early part of the Revolution, but at these only men remained on the meeting grounds over night. This was a vital difference, for at genuine camp-meetings women take a very prominent part in many of the important, though unofficial, excesses. There is a tradition in our family that the first Methodist camp-meetings were conducted in Lincoln County, North Carolina, by the Rev. Daniel Asbury, several years before they were employed in the West. This has been corroborated by a Methodist historian,[7] who says that in 1794 the members of Rehoboth congregation in Lincoln County, which was organized by Daniel Asbury, held a camp-meeting in the forest near the church, which was so successful that it continued for several days. More than three hundred men and women were converted under the preaching of Daniel Asbury, William McKendree, Nicholas Watters, William Fulwood, and Dr. James Hall, a Presbyterian minister of Iredell County. The next year another meeting was held near the Famous Rock Spring, and a few months later Daniel Asbury and James Hall conducted a great union meeting at Shepherd's Cross-road, in Iredell County, which was in progress more than a week.

Camp-meetings were introduced into the western religious field about the middle of 1799, when John and William McGee, the former a Methodist exhorter and the latter a Presbyterian minister, arrived in Logan County, Kentucky, on a preaching tour out of Tennessee. They attended a sacramental meeting in McGready's church at Red River, and met with such astonishing success that reports of their prowess spread throughout the countryside, and at their next performance, at Muddy River, many families came with wagons and encamped in the woods. The plan met with instant favour, and the camp-meetings soon became a regular and an important feature of the revivals. They usually began on Thursday or Friday, and continued until the following Tuesday or Wednesday, and generally centred about a country meeting-house. There was preaching each morning, afternoon, and evening, and sometimes the crowd became so frantic for salvation that the services were continued throughout the night under the light of the moon and stars, and of torches which flickered from niches cut in trees. Both pious and impious settlers came from ten to a hundred miles away, bringing bedding, provisions, and tents, or sleeping in their covered wagons. The meetings became popular in all parts of the United States, but reached the full flower of perfection in Kentucky, where they attracted enormous congregations. More than twenty thousand people thronged the grounds at a meeting at Cabin Creek, Kentucky, a crowd almost as large appeared at another gathering in Cambridge, near Paris, Kentucky, and an even greater number attended the holy conclave at Cane Ridge, in Bourbon County, Kentucky, which centred about Elder Barton Stone's church.

Francis Asbury regarded camp-meetings with great favour; to him the spectacle of thousands of men and women and little children writhing in torment was a glorious visitation of the Lord, and he loved to hear a score of howling prophets belabouring the wicked. "I pray to God," he wrote, " that there may be a score of camp-meetings a week, and wonderful seasons of the Lord in all directions," and again, " I rejoice to hear that there will be four or five hundred camp-meetings this year." Wherever he went he urged them upon the Methodist circuits, and was even able to organize them in the districts around New York, Philadelphia, and Boston; in his Journal he described one at Philipse Manor, near New York City, which was attended by more than six thousand people, including a large delegation from Brooklyn. The first he attended was at Drake's Creek meeting-house near Nashville, in 1800. " Yesterday," he wrote, " and especially during the night, were witnessed scenes of deep interest. . . . The stand was in the open air, embosomed in a wood of lofty beech-trees. The ministers of God, Methodists and Presbyterians, united their labours, and mingled with the childlike simplicity of primitive times. Fires blazing here and there dispelled the darkness, and the shouts of the redeemed captives, and the cries of precious souls struggling into life, broke the silence of midnight. The weather was delightful; as if heaven smiled, whilst mercy flowed in abundant streams of salvation to perishing sinners. We suppose there were at least thirty souls converted at this meeting. I rejoice that God is visiting the sons of the Puritans, who are candid enough to acknowledge their obligations to the Methodists."[8]

3

The most remarkable feature of the western revivals was the extraordinary physical phenomena that accompanied them. They appeared early in the period, and at first were similar to the marvels with which Methodists everywhere had been familiar for more that fifty years, and by which they measured the holiness of their preachers; they had frequently occurred in England under the ministry of George Whitefield and the Wesleys, and in this country under the threatening exhortations of Benjamin Abbott, Robert Williams, Lorenzo Dow, and others. But they reached their peak at the camp-meetings, and as the excitement grew throughout the Ohio and Allegheny valleys, the excesses increased in volume and variety. Before the fever had abated, the congregations, both sinful and pious alike, were jerking, barking, jumping, hopping, dancing, prancing, screeching, howling, writhing in fits and convulsions, falling in cataleptic trances, and performing many other holy antics.

But except in unimportant details and perhaps also in magnitude, these exercises were peculiar neither to the Methodists nor the western meetings. Many of them had been observed during the New England revivals conducted by Jonathan Edwards and the Tennants, and history furnishes accounts of similar instances in all times and among all peoples. So does the Bible. David dancing almost naked before an image of his tribal god Yahveh (now ✓ the property of the Christians) is a perfect example of religious frenzy. Epidemics of trembling and shaking followed the Catholic persecutions during the Reformation, and before the Christians decided that Jesus' belief in demoniac possession was incorrect, the reputed presence of a devil caused outbreaks of raving, dancing, jumping, and convulsions, which affected all classes. The famous Tremblers of Cevennes were religious zealots who attained an ecstatic state under the persecutions of Louis XIV, and they had their methodistic counterpart in the Holy Jumpers of Wales, a sect which grew out of the labours of Wesleyan missionaries. The Jumpers survive, as do their spiritual brethren, the Holy Rollers and the Shakers. Inmates of nunneries and monasteries have always been peculiarly susceptible to such exercises, and in many instances have gone even farther than the Methodists. The latter can produce nothing to match the work of a fifteenth-century German nun who was seized with a passion for biting her companions, a mania which spread to other German convents and into Holland and Italy. About the same period the inmates of a French nunnery began to mew like cats, while the monks of a monastery nearby barked like dogs.

An interesting characteristic of the American phenomena was the frequency with which the preachers themselves and children were affected. The former were often prostrated in the pulpit, and were just as often impelled to jerk and bark, or dance around the meeting-house crying the glories of the Almighty. The Rev. John Thompson was afflicted with the dancing exercise during a meeting at Turtle Creek, Kentucky, and for more than an hour cavorted about the pulpit, keeping perfect time and murmuring over and over in a loud whisper: "This is the Holy Ghost — glory!"[9] At an early meeting in Red River Church, the Rev. William McGee suddenly sank unconscious to the floor of the pulpit, and his brother John trembled so violently that he could not preach. But he was finally able to announce stutteringly that God had hold of him and was shaking him, and immediately there was a great uproar throughout the church. Many fell unconscious to the floor, but others could only grunt and groan. William McGee was frequently so wrought upon that he descended from the pulpit and rolled over and over in the dirt, his eyes streaming with tears as he exclaimed: "Jesus! Jesus!"[10] John was similarly affected, and was also impelled to creep about on his belly like a snake, uttering weird cries and exhorting. This was generally regarded as having something or other to do with the Garden of Eden. Other preachers were addicted to holy hopping and dancing, and stopped their sermons while they pranced up and down the aisles and around the preaching stand. One North Carolina exhorter fell a victim to an extremely distressing affliction; he sometimes stopped in the middle of his sermon, shouted that God was in the house, and then began to squeal like a pig. Thenceforth his sermon was constantly interrupted by the cry of "Oink! oink! oink!" and sometimes his friends had to prevent him from rooting his nose into the ground.

The children attended the camp-meetings with their mothers, and the effect of the excitement upon their immature minds and nervous systems was all that the most ferocious preacher could desire. Almost invariably they were among the first to be tormented by visions of hell, and were encouraged to scream their love of Jesus and their fear of Satan. At almost every meeting the congregations stood entranced before the holy spectacle of children between the ages of six and twelve crawling about on their hands and knees, jerking, barking, and foaming at the mouth. Often they were raised to the shoulders of their proud fathers, where they told the people what was wrong with the human race, and invited them to go to heaven. At a sacramental meeting at Flemingsburg, in Fleming County, Kentucky, in April 1801, a peculiarly captivating performance was provided by two little girls about nine or ten years old. They were affected early, and began to twitch and jerk, and once in a while uttered hoarse barking sounds. Throughout the meeting they constantly cried out in great distress, while preachers and volunteer zealots crowded about them and urged them to go to the celestial kingdom. Finally one of the children turned to the other and shrieked: "Oh! You little sinner! Come to Christ!" and continued to exhort until her companion fell in a faint. She then picked her up in her arms and lugged her down to the pulpit, crying: "Oh! Here is another star of light!"[11]

A month later, at a meeting held by both Methodists and Presbyterians at Indian Creek, in Harrison County, Kentucky, a twelve-year-old boy ran around the stand for ten minutes, barking furiously, while the preachers cheered him on. He then loped into the forest, where he mounted a fallen log and began to preach, screaming with such fury that he soon attracted the main body of the congregation. Tears streamed from his eyes as he alternately barked and jerked, and warned the people of their doom if they persisted in their wickedness. Two preachers supported him, and he talked for more than an hour. Finally he held his handkerchief aloft, and dropping it slowly, cried out: " Thus, O sinners, shall you drop into hell unless you forsake your sins and turn to the Lord! " He then fainted. This was a new sort of spell, and its effect was truly magical. As the handkerchief fluttered to the ground, many shouted that it was ringing wet with the blood of Jesus, and the crowd was stampeded. Some began to bark, some jerked, some danced, some hopped, some just stood and wept, and others fell to the ground and bounced hither and yon — in fits and convulsions. At another meeting a little girl ten years old exhorted for two hours, and similar scenes were enacted. At still another, near Ten Mile, Pennsylvania, a little boy wept bitterly and would not be comforted. " Oh! I am lost forever! " he cried. " I am going right down to hell! Oh! I see hell, and the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone kindling it." [12]

The jerking exercise appears to have started among the frenzied Methodists of eastern Tennessee, but it soon became epidemic throughout the territory affected by the revivals. It was confined at first to spasmodic twitching of the forearm, but later affected every muscle and tendon of the body. It was especially severe upon the muscles of the neck, for the head of the jerker flew backward and forward and from side to side with great rapidity, and with such force that head-dresses and even handkerchiefs which had been bound tightly around the cranium were shaken off. Sometimes the subject's head would describe a circular motion, which he generally followed by spinning his whole body round like a top. The jerks became so prevalent that they occurred when the tormented one was not under the direct influence of preaching, and once a man or woman became a victim of the exercise, it was renewed at the mere mention of it. Ladies frequently began jerking while engaged in their household duties, and labourers suddenly left off their work in the fields and began to bob up and down. But the exercise was principally in evidence at camp-meetings; sometimes every member of a congregation was affected. "I have seen more than five hundred people jerking at once in my large congregations," wrote the Rev. Peter Cartwright. "Most usually persons taken with the jerks were generally very severe. To see these proud young gentlemen and young ladies, dressed in their silks, jewellery, and prunella from top to toe, take the jerks would often excite my risibilities. The first jerk or so, you would see their fine bonnets, caps, and combs fly; and so sudden would be the jerking of the head that their long, loose hair would crack almost as loud as a wagoner's whip." [13] Sometimes a measure of relief would be obtained if the jerker could catch hold of something. Lorenzo Dow described a camp-meeting ground in a Kentucky grove, where all the saplings had been cut off at the height of a man's chest, so the jerkers could hold on to them when the exercises began. Frequently during a meeting a hundred men and women could be seen clinging to the trees and jerking violently.

The jerks generally subsided of their own accord, as blood-letting and other attentions by medical men seldom had any effect. They left a trail of shattered nerves all over the West, and occasionally were fatal. Cartwright thus described the death of a jerker at a camp-meeting conducted by William McGee and others on the Ridge in Kentucky:

> There was a very great work of religion in the encampment. The jerks were very prevalent. There was a company of drunken rowdies who came to interrupt the meeting. These rowdies were headed by a very large drinking man. They came with their bottles of whisky in their pockets. This large man cursed the jerks, and all religion. Shortly afterwards he took the jerks and he started to run, but he jerked so powerfully, he could not get away. He halted among some saplings, and although he was violently agitated, he took out his bottle of whisky and swore he would drink the damned jerks to death, but jerked at such a rate that he could not get the bottle to his mouth, although he

> tried hard. At length he fetched a sudden jerk, and the bottle struck a sapling and was broken to pieces and spilled his whisky on the ground. There was a great crowd gathered round him, and when he lost his whisky he became very much enraged, and cursed and swore profanely, his jerks still increasing. At length he fetched a very violent jerk, snapped his neck, fell, and soon expired, with his mouth full of cursing and bitterness. . . . I always looked upon the jerks as a judgment of God.[14]

Most of the Methodist preachers agreed with Cartwright that the jerks and other phenomena had their origin in heaven, and encouraged their converts to yield to whatever excesses their overwrought nerves might lead them into; those who gave the most spectacular performances were considered the most blessed. Asbury approved of this attitude, although he once remarked that the exercises were not of themselves final proof of acceptance by the Lord; that whoever could not give a convincing account of the converting power of God might be mistaken. The schismatic Presbyterians, led by Elder Stone, McNemar, and others, also rejoiced at the sight of jerking, howling, barking congregations, but the excesses of the camp-meetings were opposed by the Baptists and the regular Presbyterians. The Baptists held that they were signs of demoniac possession, and pointed proudly to the exploit of a Baptist preacher whose congregations suddenly began to howl and jerk in unison. He pointed his finger at the front row and shouted: "In the name of the Lord I command all unclean spirits to leave this place!" [15] Immediately the jerks subsided. The more intelligent among the settlers also objected to the orgiastic horrors of the revivals, and particularly deplored the promiscuous sex relations which naturally grew out of such constant and unrestrained mingling of men and women when both were emotionally unbalanced. This was always a most dangerous phase of camp-meeting activity, for the wall between religious frenzy and sexual passion is very thin, and then, as now, camp-meetings were followed by an increase in the number of illegitimate births.

But the Methodists did not find it difficult to produce evidence that the camp-meeting phenomena were directly from the hand of God, for the scoffer was frequently smitten with the jerks and barks at the moment of sneering. One man remarked to another at a sacramental meeting in Tennessee: " I am persuaded it is the work of the Devil." Scarcely had the words left his lips when he screamed, and tumbled headlong from a log on which he had been standing. He jerked for hours and then hastened to join the Methodists. Jacob Young, a Methodist itinerant, told his congregations that the jerks were a judgment of God sent especially against their community, and immediately five hundred men and women began jerking, jumping, and dancing. A Kentucky youth, ordered by his parents to attend a camp-meeting, told them he was ill, and remained in bed. But he could not get to sleep again. His mind turned to the camp-meeting, and he thought particularly of a young woman who was a noted jerker. Suddenly he was jerked out of bed and round the room. He prayed, the jerks subsided, and he returned to bed. But again he thought of the young woman, and was again hurled from his bed. He dressed, went into the yard, and started unhairing a dog-skin. But the graining knife was flirted out of his hand, and he was jerked to and fro about the yard. He was again relieved by prayer, but when he resumed his work, the jerking was renewed. He finally went to his room and began to weep, and when his family returned, he was on his knees begging for mercy.[16]

The holy barking exercise frequently, but not always, accompanied or preceded the jerks, and also became epidemic throughout the revival region. " It was common," wrote a Kentucky preacher, " to hear people barking like a flock of spaniels on their way to meeting. There they would start up suddenly in a fit of barking, rush out, roam around, and in a short time come foaming back. Down on all fours they sometimes went, growling, snapping their teeth, and barking just like dogs." [17] Some of the converts who had visions and went into ecstatic trances reported that throughout the period of unconsciousness their bodies were permeated with a peculiar perfume which was obviously celestial, and appeared to be similar to the smell of Christ's garments. Others, besides barking and jerking, rolled over and over, or turned cart-wheels; and still others ran in a straight line until they fell exhausted or came up against a tree; at one meeting in western Pennsylvania fifty noses were broken by being butted against hard saplings and more than a hundred others bled profusely. There was much suffering, and the gathering was accounted very successful. Many who had reached the heights of ecstasy through barking, jerking, running, jumping, or dancing, suddenly began to sing in a very peculiar manner, the sound issuing from the chest instead of the throat. They explained that they occupied choice seats in the Heavenly City, and were trying to join in the singing of the angelic host.

The falling exercise, which had been common in Methodist meetings since the field-preaching of the Wesleys and George Whitefield, first appeared in the West in July and August 1788, when James Haw reported by letter to Francis Asbury that several had been prostrated during quarterly meetings in Bourbon County, Kentucky. This holy toppling became a regular feature of the great revivals, and continued to be the most popular. Scores fall at every meeting, and at some of the large gatherings hundreds and even thousands were down at one time. Some of the victims had no preliminary warning; others said they felt tingling sensations in the right elbow, appropriately near the funny-bone, or in the arteries of the upper thigh. Immediately thereafter the toppler experienced distressing shortness of breath, and the heart seemed to be swelling and trying to burst from the body. He screamed and fell to the floor, and " every tear now leaves his eye, and he shouts aloud for about twenty minutes. Meanwhile the features of the face are calm and regular. His voice becomes more and more feeble for about twenty minutes more. By this time he is speechless and motionless, and lies quiet perhaps an hour. During this time his pulse is rather lower than the usual state — the extremities are cold, the skin fresh and clear, the features of the face full, the eyes closed, but not so close as in sleep. Speech and motion return in the same gradual manner; the features become more full than before." [18]

More than a thousand fell at the Cabin Creek meeting in Kentucky, and to prevent their being trodden under foot by the horde of stamping, screaming converts they were collected and laid out on two sides of the meeting-house, where they remained unconscious for hours. This procedure was followed at all of the important meetings, and sometimes as many as fifty men neglected their own salvation to carry the fallen under shelter; often the building would be filled with them. But all of the exercises reached the peak of frenzy at the great Cane Ridge meeting in Bourbon County, Kentucky, which began on Friday, August 6, 1801, and continued without intermission until the following Thursday. During this time there was continuous preaching and exhorting by seventeen Methodist and Presbyterian preachers, and by an untold number of volunteers. It has been estimated that at one time three thousand people lay unconscious before the preaching stands, and that as many as five hundred jerked and barked in unison. One prayer of fifteen minutes' duration by the Rev. William Burke, a famous Methodist itinerant, felled several hundred of his hearers; they dropped to the ground one after another, as if they had marched into a burst of machine-gun fire.

This was probably the wildest and most ferocious religious gathering ever held in the United States. Between twenty-five and thirty thousand people attended; they came from as far away as a hundred miles, and for days before the preaching began, the roads were filled with wagon trains, and by singing, ecstatic pilgrims plodding through the dust and heat. The meeting began in a grove, in the centre of which was the Cane Ridge Church, but the excitement soon became so intense and wide-spread that all unity was lost, and the furore spread over a square mile and more of territory. When night came, torches and oil lamps shed a ghostly, flickering light upon the scene, and the weirdness and solemnity of the surroundings combined with the screaming denunciations of the preachers to throw the vast congregation into wild excesses. The sound of the barking, shouting, singing, and howling was audible more than five miles away, and sometimes the ground shook as the frenzied thousands stamped and leaped in their frantic efforts to find favour in the sight of God, convinced that the more they cavorted, the greater would be the pleasure of the Lord. Throughout the adjacent forest the preachers, mounted on stumps and logs, screamed their threats of damnation and promises of eternal glory, and in every grove and clearing were groaning, grunting groups, not all of whose excesses were religious in character, although based upon ancient rites of worship. Little children went barking and jerking through throngs of men and women who clamoured ecstatically that the babies were being tormented by God; one child was considered especially blessed because she barked hoarsely, like a mastiff, while the best the others could do was to imitate spaniels or other small dogs. Another girl of seven perched upon a preacher's shoulder and shrieked descriptions of heaven and hell that sent hundreds into convulsions; they grovelled and rolled upon the ground, beseeching the Lord to take them away from the hard labour of the frontier and conduct them to choice places amid the sensuous delights of paradise.

4

None of the revivals in the southern, middle, and northern states equalled the western camp and sacramental meetings in violence, but some exceeded them in duration, and in all there were great excesses. The jerks and barks, however, seldom occurred east of the Alleghenies; there the sinners and converts contented themselves with falling flat and indulging in fits. During the meeting of the general conference in Baltimore in 1800, services were held continuously for forty-five hours, and within a few months more than a thousand had been converted; the excitement was as great as during the uproar of 1879. By 1801 Virginia and the other southern states were again aflame. Early in the latter year a meeting began at the home of Captain Burton on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and continued without intermission for thirteen days, during which time ninety-five names were added to the rolls of Methodism. Captain Burton himself, long an enemy of the Wesleyans, was brought into the fold and built a chapel for the use of the Methodist itinerants, and by the end of the year more than seven hundred conversions had been recorded. In 1802 the whole town of Rockingham, Virginia, suspended business entirely for nine days and attended revival meetings, thousands crowding into the village from the surrounding country. Hundreds were converted. Similar gatherings were held in North and South Carolina, and in Georgia and far-away Mississippi, where Asbury had sent Methodist missionaries. Quarterly meetings were frequently turned into protracted camp-meetings, and the evangelists preached for days at a time to screaming multitudes whose clamour could be heard for miles.

Northward the holy fire spread into Delaware, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York, and even into Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont. More than three thousand joined the Methodist Church on the peninsula between the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays in 1800, five hundred were added to the membership in Philadelphia, and a thousand on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. On Landaff circuit, in New Hampshire, a hundred were converted, and in Chesterfield circuit another hundred, and a similar number on the Vershire circuit in Vermont. A most melting time was experienced in the town of Athens, and eighty-three joined the Methodists in one day. In Dover, Delaware, Judge Bassett conducted a protracted meeting for more than a week, with preaching by himself and Thomas Ware, and hundreds had fits and were saved.

Several great evangelists arose among the Methodists during the revivals. Perhaps the chief one in the southern and middle states was Thomas Smith, a native of Virginia, who began to preach in his eighteenth year. He was converted at an even earlier age, and underwent the experience that was so common in the Wesleyan itinerancy. Religion affected his mind, and he contemplated suicide, climbing into the attic of his house with a rope, intending to hang himself from a beam. However, he thought better of the scheme after praying, and began a career as a Methodist preacher, his mania no longer being suicidal. He laboured in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, going over the ground that Benjamin Abbott had covered so efficiently, and with much the same success, for a new generation of sinners had arisen since Abbott's departure for heaven. Hundreds fell prostrate before Smith from the beginning of his ministry, and his congregation was frequently transformed from a staid gathering into one gigantic mass of people having fits. He discoursed with great power and energy, but preached very short sermons, seldom haranguing longer than twenty minutes at a time. But he made up for this by preaching four or five sermons without leaving the pulpit.

Smith's most notable exploit was performed during a meeting at Pemberton, New Jersey. A young man began running around the pulpit with tears streaming down his face, and Smith ran along behind him, exhorting him to be saved. Three gentlemen came up and desired to escort the young man to his home, but the evangelist protested that he should be permitted to get religion if he wished. The gentlemen said that they did not believe in Christianity, and Smith suggested that they permit the congregation to pray for them thirty minutes, guaranteeing that at the end of that period they would be happily writhing on the floor. The three knew nothing of the powers of Methodist preachers, and the bargain was struck. They ranged themselves side by side before the pulpit, while Smith held his watch in one hand, lifted the other toward heaven, and ordered the praying to begin. The congregation prayed with such fury that the foundations of the house shook, and when Smith shouted: "Fifteen minutes of the time are gone!" one of the gentlemen trembled and fell unconscious to the floor. Another collapsed when Smith screamed: "Twenty minutes of the time are gone!" and five minutes later the third collapsed in a chair.[19] They then joined the Methodists.

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[1] Bangs: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. I, p. 264.
[2] Phoebus: *Beams of Light,* etc., p. 95.
[3] Ibid., p. 96.
[4] Ibid., p. 98.
[5] Cleveland: *The Great Revival in the West,* p. 135.
[6] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 342.
[7] Shipp: *History of Methodism in South Carolina,* p. 282.

[8] Asbury: *Journal*; Vol. II, p. 476.
[9] McNemar: *The Kentucky Revival*, p. 60.
[10] Cleveland: *The Great Revival in the West*, p. 45.
[11] McNemar: *The Kentucky Revival*, p. 21.
[12] Cleveland: *The Great Revival in the West*, p. 97.
[13] Cartwright: *The Backwoods Preacher*, etc., p. 20.
[14] Ibid., p. 21.
[15] Cleveland: *The Great Revival in the West*, p. 125.
[16] Ibid., p. 126.
[17] Ibid., p. 101.
[18] Ibid., p. 95.
[19] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church*; Vol. III, p. 419.

CHAPTER XIII

Job

I

REFERENCES to his ailments began to appear in Francis Asbury's Journal early in 1772, when he contracted a severe cold during a visit to the villages of Westchester and Staten Island. Thereafter he was never in good health; he suffered terribly from boils, fevers, inflammatory rheumatism, sore throat, weak eyes, bronchitis, asthma, toothache, ulcers in the throat and stomach, neuralgia, intestinal disorders, swollen glands, skin diseases which followed visits to the dirty cabins of the frontier, and finally galloping consumption. The foremost physicians of the period were unable to relieve him, not even the celebrated Drs. Rush and Physick, and sometimes his agonies were frightful; frequently he could make no entry in his Journal save "Pain! Pain! Pain!" As almost everyone does who is long ill, he became to some extent a hypochondriac, and experienced the hypochondriac's morbid delight in recounting his symptoms and describing his sufferings; many pages of his Journals are filled with them. "Oh, my jaws and teeth!" he wrote, and "Oh, the rocks, hills, ruts, and stumps! My bones, my bones!" and again, "I could only speak sitting. . . . I took a pew near the pulpit and preached from there." Again he "stood upon one knee and one foot, about an hour and a half."

He took enormous doses of medicine, performed slight surgical operations on himself, and raised great blisters upon the slightest provocation, frequently blistering his whole body from throat to abdomen. Once he preached and prayed a whole afternoon in the most terrible but delightful agony, with so many blisters that he could neither stand nor sit, for he had blistered not only soles of his feet, but less refined portions of his anatomy also. He was propped on pillows in the pulpit, where he discoursed for hour after hour, saving many trembling sinners. He took no care of himself whatever, riding horseback or in a cart through snow-storms and rain-storms, in heat and cold, with biting pains in his chest, and his stomach and throat filled with ulcers, feverish from pain and religion. Frequently he did not have sufficient warm clothing, and when someone did give him a heavy, comfortable coat, he invariably bestowed it upon the first shivering itinerant he met wandering disconsolately through the country. Two days each week he fasted, and half of another day; he would sleep not more than six hours, for Wesley had decided that was enough.

All of these things he notes in his Journals with great gusto, and gives long lists of the medicines he took and the measures he employed to combat his illnesses, most of which had no other effect than to aggravate his condition, for he would not rest and give his body a chance to recuperate. Tartar emetic was his favourite remedy, and of this he took large quantities. For an ulcerated throat he used a gargle of "sage tea, honey, vinegar, and mustard, and after that another gargle of sage tea, alum, rose-leaves, and loaf sugar to strengthen the parts." He also took a diet, as he called it, brewed from this remarkable formula: "One quart of hard cider, one hundred nails, a handful of snakeroot, a handful of pennell seed, a handful of wormwood." [1] He boiled this concoction to a pint, and drank a wineglassful each morning before breakfast for ten days, meanwhile using no butter, milk, or meat. He complained in his Journal that this medicine "made the stomach very sick." Once when he had "putrid sore throat," he took a strong physic, applied four blisters, and was bled from arm and tongue, but did not obtain the relief he expected.

To his physical troubles Asbury added terrific mental turmoil. He was constantly engaged in spiritual flagellation; he yearned for sanctification and complete holiness, and laboured under a fuming, fretful worry over his own salvation and that of his people; throughout his life his mind whirled like a pin-wheel. About the time he was first ill, he began to refer to himself as "Poor Francis!" and later as "wheezing, coughing, groaning Francis," and thereafter that was the dominant note of his life. He gloried in his ailments and rejoiced in trouble and persecution, for he regarded them as the cross which his God had given him to bear, and as certain signs of the favour of the Lord; in common with all frenzied religionists he held to the paradoxical view that suffering was an indication of the loving mercy of God. Whenever he invaded a new territory to convert the sinners to Christianity and so set them at each other's throats, his whole attitude asked the question: "When does the persecuting begin?" He once told the Rev. Daniel Asbury that he hoped, before he died, to receive the stigmata, like St. Francis of Assisi, and thus be admitted to that select group of saints who have been tortured while living by the God of All Goodness, so that when dead they might occupy exalted positions in heaven.

To the end that he might attain holiness through suffering, Asbury tortured himself physically with horrid medicines and with painful bleedings and blisterings, and flogged his mind with constant thoughts of his own unworthiness. His whole life is a record of fearful grovelling before the Almighty; he wanted a continuous religious thrill, and mourned because he could not have it. From his twelfth year he thought of little else than God and religion; indeed, he wrote in later life that as early as the age of seven he "felt something of God." He came to America with nothing else on his mind, and there was nothing else on it during the forty-five years of his ministry in this country. These extracts taken at random from his Journal show the trend of his thought:

> I do not sufficiently love God, nor live by faith.
>
> My mind was much taken up with God, but I must lament that I am not perfectly crucified with God.
>
> I bless the Lord for daily afflictions of body and mind.
>
> My body was weak and my mind much tempted.
>
> I feel some conviction for sleeping too long.

> Unguarded and trivial conversation has brought a degree of spiritual deadness.
>
> My conscience reproved me for the appearance of levity.
>
> A cloud rested on my mind, which was occasioned by talking and jesting. I also feel at times tempted to impatience and pride of heart.
>
> My heart is still depressed for want of more religion. I long to be wholly given up, and to seek no favour but what cometh from God.
>
> Lord, prepare me by Thy grace for the patient endurance of hunger, labour, heat, the clownishness of ignorant piety, the impudence of the impious, unreasonable preachers, and more unreasonable heretics and heresy.
>
> For my unholiness and unfaithfulness my soul is humbled. Were I to stand on my own merit, where should I go but to hell?

Humility and self-abasement were Asbury's fetishes. Laughter and play he considered affronts to the Lord; he hated them, and often condemned both himself and others for occasional lapses into joviality. "My conscience smote me severely," he wrote, "for speaking an idle word in company." He feared praise and would accept no commendation from anyone. "Some of my friends," he wrote, "were so unguarded and imprudent as to commend me to my face. Satan, ready for every advantage, seized the opportunity and assaulted me with self-pleasing, self-exalting ideas. But the Lord enabled me to discover the danger, and the snare was broken. May He ever keep me humble and little and mean in my own eyes."

The Rev. Joshua Marsden, an English preacher who made frequent visits to this country and knew Asbury intimately, once described him as being dead to all that bore the appearance of polished and pleasing life. Marsden wrote:

> I never saw him indulge in even innocent pleasantry. His was the solemnity of an apostle; it was so interwoven with his conduct that he could not put off the gravity of the bishop either in the parlour or the dining-room. He was a rigid

> enemy to ease; hence the pleasures of study and the charms of recreation he alike sacrificed to the more sublime work of saving souls. His faith was a " constant evidence of things not seen," for he lived as a man totally blind to all worldly attractions. He seemed to estimate nothing as excellent but what tended to the glory of God. Flattery, of which many great minds are highly susceptible, found him fortified behind a double guard of humility, and opposition but served to awaken those energies of mind which arise with difficulties and surmound the greatest. He knew nothing about pleasing the flesh at the expense of duty; flesh and blood were enemies with whom he never took counsel.
>
> In his appearance he was a picture of plainness and simplicity, bordering upon the costume of the Friends; the reader may figure to himself an old man, spare and tall, but remarkably clean, with a plain frock-coat, drab or mixed waistcoat, and small-clothes of the same kind, a neat stock, a broad-brimmed hat with an uncommon low crown, while his white locks, venerable with age, added a simplicity to his appearance it is not easy to describe; his countenance had a cast of severity, but this was owing probably to his habitual gravity and seriousness; his look was remarkably penetrating; in a word, I never recollect to have seen a man of a more venerable and dignified appearance.
>
> He had stated hours of retirement and prayer, upon which he let neither company nor business to break in. Prayer was the seasoning of all his avocations; he never suffered the cloth to be removed from the table until he had kneeled down to address the Almighty; it was the preface to all business, and often the link that connected opposite duties, and the conclusion of whatever he took in hand. Divine wisdom seemed to direct all his undertakings; for he sought its counsel upon all occasions; no part of his conduct was the result of accident; the plan by which he transacted all his affairs was as regular as the movements of a timepiece, hence he had no idle moments, no fragments of time broken and scattered.[2]

The Rev. Henry Boehm, who was Asbury's travelling companion for many years and heard him preach more than fifteen hundred sermons, thus described him:

> Bishop Asbury was five feet and nine inches high, weighed one hundred and fifty-one pounds, erect in person, and of a very commanding appearance. His features were rugged, but his countenance was intelligent, though time and care had furrowed it deep with wrinkles. His nose was prominent, his mouth large, as if made on purpose to talk, and his eyes of a bluish cast, and so keen that it seemed as if he could look right through a person. He had a fine forehead, indicative of no ordinary brain, and beautiful white locks, which hung about his brow and shoulders and added to his venerable appearance. There was as much native dignity about him as any man I ever knew. He seemed born to sway others. There was an austerity about his looks that was forbidding to those who were unacquainted with him. In dress he was a pattern of neatness and plainness. He could have passed for a Quaker had it not been for the colour of his garments, which were black when I travelled with him. He formerly wore gray clothes. He wore a low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat, a frock-coat, which was generally buttoned up to the neck, with straight collar. He wore breeches or small-clothes, with leggings. Sometimes he wore shoe-buckles. Indeed, all the preachers, and I among the number, wore breeches and leggings till 1810, and then several left them off, which Bishop Asbury heartily disapproved.[3]

2

It was Wesley's fancy to proclaim that the world was his parish, but Asbury's parish was in truth a continent; he was bishop of a diocese that for territorial extent has probably never been exceeded. And he travelled over every part of it; when he died, there was no country in the then United States which he had not visited, and few towns and villages which had not heard his message. It has been estimated that from the day of his arrival in America until his death he travelled a grand total of only a little less than three hundred thousand miles, on horseback or in carts and carriages, wearing out half a dozen horses and innumerable vehicles. In his early preaching tours and his later episcopal journeys he made eighty-four trips into Virginia, eighty into Maryland, and seventy-eight into Pennsylvania. He crossed the borders of New Jersey more than sixty times, of New York more than fifty, and made sixty-three excursions into North Carolina. He first visited Massachusetts in 1791, and thereafter went into that state twenty-three times; he rode forty-six times into South Carolina, twenty into Tennessee, and the same number into Georgia, and into other states and territories with equal frequency. He covered virtually the entire territory of American Methodism each year. A typical journey carried him from New York through New Jersey to Philadelphia, thence to Wilmington and south to Baltimore, and from there to Alexandria, Petersburg, and Norfolk in Virginia; to Raleigh in North Carolina, and through the mountains of that state to Charleston, in South Carolina, and thence into Georgia. There he turned back and passed again through South Carolina and North Carolina, where he set his face to the west and penetrated the mountain passes to the Holston River in Tennessee, and then into Kentucky as far as Lexington. He returned to the Holston and rode up the west side of the Alleghenies, and then through Virginia again, and to Uniontown in Pennsylvania. Travelling over the Alleghenies by way of Laurel Hill and Cumberland, he went again to Baltimore, and then through Connecticut and Massachusetts to Lynn, and across the valley of the Connecticut and over the Berkshire Hills by way of Peekskill to Albany, and then down the valley of the Hudson to New York. He penetrated as far north as Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire, and made one preaching tour into Canada.

Almost every day of his life he was in the saddle, and in every page of his Journals there is a record of constant movement. "My horse trots stiff," he wrote, "and no wonder, when I have ridden him upon an average of five thousand miles a year for five years successively!" He rode a thousand miles through the western wilderness, "on the waters of the Nollichucky to the mouth of the Clinch, on the north, middle, and south branches of the Holston, on New River, Greenbrier and by the head-springs of the Monongahela." Again he wrote: "In four months we compute we have travelled 2,575 miles. The travels of each day were as follows: Monday, forty-five miles; Tuesday, fifty miles; Wednesday, sixty miles." On one excursion into Kentucky he rode three hundred miles in six days, and on his way back covered five hundred miles in nine days; from July 30, 1801, to September 12, 1802, he rode in carts or on horseback more than 4,900 miles.

He was compelled to undergo great hardships and privations. Frequently he went without food; at other times he had nothing to eat but wild fruits, and corn that he picked along the road and boiled over an open fire. He stopped at inns where his ribald travelling companions, with their swearing, card-playing, and disregard of religion, distressed him more than the terrors of the road; again he put up for the night in a crowded log-cabin, twelve feet by ten. Many times he could find no bed at all, but slept on the floor, or on a pile of dirty skins, bewailing his lot and wishing that he had at least " a nice, clean plank to lie on."

But he permitted nothing to interrupt his travels, neither the weather nor his own mental and physical illnesses, nor the danger from Indians and thieving white men; he plodded on, bronchitis and consumption ravaging his chest, rheumatism pulling at his legs and arms, his feet swollen, his throat and stomach burned by ulcers, unable to sleep, itching frightfully from skin diseases — and praying, preaching, prophesying, and singing hymns almost without cessation. When he could not ride, he was lifted into a cart and hauled the length of his journey, and lifted out again at the end of it to preach; sometimes he was unable to sit erect in the saddle, and was tied to his horse and started into the wilderness with little hope of reaching his destination, but feverishly happy in the conviction that his sufferings were sent by the Lord, and believing that if he perished a choice seat awaited him in heaven. He had no place he could call home, but carried his belongings, always pitifully small, in his saddle-bags, and slept where night found him. He became the best-known man in the whole of the United States, and for almost half a century his gaunt figure, encased in black or gray homespun and surmounted by a low-crowned beaver hat, was a familiar sight along the country roads from Maine to the southern border of Georgia, and from the sea to the territory beyond the Alleghenies. And as he rode, he sang hymns at the top of his voice, or prayed aloud for the salvation of the Methodists; again he was silent as he peered, from deep-set eyes that burned beneath bushy brows from a lined and weather-beaten face, into a book, for it was on horseback that he did most of his reading, and pursued his studies in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew.

3

Asbury never married, and never had any intention of marrying. Not only did the conditions under which he laboured in America effectively discourage matrimony, but he was not interested in women as females; his only concern was with their souls. He revered them as " mothers in Israel," as producers of good Methodists and the multitude of sinners whom God had called him to convert, and as grist for the mills of salvation, but they were nothing more to him. Sex had no place whatever in his life. He was not a victim of suppressed desires, for apparently he never experienced any desire. He was as nearly sexless as a man could well be. He once told the Rev. Daniel Asbury that he had never seen a woman who possessed the slightest physical attraction for him, and that, when he was a boy, he had resolved to devote his life to religion, and to live and die in celibacy. Some Methodist historians incline to the belief that he had a sweetheart when he left England, and that the affair was broken off by his mother, who would permit nothing to obstruct the fulfilment of her covenant with the Almighty, or stand in the way of her son's destiny. But there is nothing in his later life to indicate that this belief is correct; it is offered merely as a possible explanation of a sentence is one of his letters to her, in which he wrote that it was not best for him to return home, " because of what happened to me when I was in England." It is my conviction that he referred to something else entirely, perhaps the troubles he had experienced with the preachers under whose supervision he laboured. But whatever it was, it provides the only mystery of an otherwise remarkably open life.

Asbury not only rejected matrimony for himself, but he was committed to a celibate ministry, and when he came into complete control of American Methodism, did everything in his power to prevent his itinerants from enlivening their gloomy lives with romance. One reason for this attitude was the fact that the preachers, receiving salaries of only about sixty-four dollars a year, were not able to support wives, and when they married, they had to locate and seek secular employment to eke out their holy incomes. Thenceforth they were able to preach only occasionally, and were of little use in spreading Methodism. Asbury once wrote that " marriage is honourable as all, but to me it is a ceremony awful as death. Well may it be so when I calculate we have lost the travelling labours of two hundred of the best men in America or the world by marriage and consequent location."

But he had much trouble with his preachers, for they flocked to the altar as readily as they saved souls, and with much the same success. Despite their poverty and the uncertainty of life with them, women wanted to marry them, and did so in large numbers each year; one reason was that in devout circles it was believed that marriage to a preacher virtually assured a home in the mansions in the skies. But they seriously interfered with Asbury's scheme for developing the church through the itinerancy. He found it especially difficult to provide preachers for a large Virginian circuit where the women were greatly in the majority, and were particularly avid in their search for husbands. The circuit riders always married within a few months after receiving their assignments, and immediately requested a location. Finally Asbury sent two decrepit old men into the district, believing that the women would not attempt to entice them to the altar, for it was obvious that as husbands they left much to be desired. However, they were married within a year, and when Asbury heard of it, he remarked: "The Devil and the women will get all my preachers."

Aside from his lack of sex curiosity and his firm conviction that a true man of God should be celibate, Asbury himself was influenced in his determination not to marry by economic distress. His salary was never more than eighty dollars a year, and for the greater part of his career it was the same as that of the preachers. And out of this income he sent remittances to his parents in England, helped the Book Concern and the fund for indigent preachers, and gave liberally to the poor itinerants, who had as much difficulty collecting their salaries in those early times as do present-day Methodist clergymen. He not only gave them money, but frequently pressed upon them the clothes from his back; once he left a conference with no clothing but a pair of breeches, a coat, and a pair of shoes, having given up his hat, shirts, and waistcoats. He never had more than one coat a year, and often wore the same garment for two or three years. He died without knowing the joy of an extra suit.

But Asbury's fondness for bachelor preachers and his own aversion to matrimony were much commented upon by Methodists, the women believing that in some way or another their sex had been insulted. So at length he set down, obviously for the purposes of the record, his reasons for celibacy:

> I was called in my fourteenth year. I began my public exercises between sixteen and seventeen; at twenty-one I travelled; at twenty-six I came to America; thus far I had reason enough for a single life. It had been my intention of returning to Europe at thirty years of age, but the war continued, and it was ten years before we had a settled, lasting peace. This was no time to marry, or be given in marriage. At thirty-nine I was ordained superintendent bishop in America. Among the duties imposed upon me by my office was that of travelling extensively, and I could hardly expect to find a woman with grace enough to enable her to live but one week out of the fifty-two with her husband. Besides, what right has any man to take advantage of the affections of a

woman, make her his wife, and by a voluntary absence subvert the whole order and economy of the marriage state, by separating those whom neither God, nature, nor the requirements of civil society permit to be put asunder? It is neither just nor generous. I may add to this that I had little money, and with this little ministered to the necessities of a beloved mother until I was fifty-seven. If I have done wrong, I hope God and the sex will forgive me. It is my duty now to bestow the pittance I may have to spare upon the widows and fatherless children, and poor married men.[4]

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[1] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 365.

[2] Strickland: *The Pioneer Bishop,* etc., p. 141, et seq.

[3] Tipple: *Francis Asbury, Prophet of the Long Road,* p. 302.

[4] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal,* p. 542.

CHAPTER XIV

Isaiah

I

LIKE the *meshuggah* prophets of eld, Francis Asbury went up and down the land crying the vengeance of the Lord, warning the people that the God of All Love was preparing to work awful atrocities upon them, threatening damnation and eternal torment in the scorching flames of hell, and predicting desolation and pestilence for those cities whose inhabitants refused to grovel before the Methodist Deity and accept the Wesleyan scheme of salvation. "Howl, O gate; cry, O city! Everyone shall howl! Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand!" shrieked the holy prophet Isaiah as he roamed through Israel, dirty, bare-footed, and raving mad. "I roared out wonderfully; I raged and threatened the people; I delivered an awful discourse; I was very alarming; it was an awful talk and the people were alarmed," wrote Asbury as he rode up and down the American continent, ill, poorly clad, and perhaps a bit mad.

But he was not a prophet of the first rank, even though a larger percentage of his foretellings came to pass than of his illustrious predecessors of the Bible. He expressed great fear for the spiritual future of New York City, and saw with gloomy satisfaction the great fires of 1776, 1796, and 1811; he deplored the wickedness of Norfolk and it was burned during the Revolution. But he had even greater success with Philadelphia and Boston, especially the former, which was punished by an epidemic of yellow fever. The pestilence began in 1793, and raged almost without cessation for six years, reaching pandemic proportions at the beginning and again in 1796 and 1798; probably fifteen thousand people perished in those years. In 1793 more than four thousand fled the city; business was at a standstill, while great crowds milled about the streets and crowded the country roads, burdened with their belongings. For a time the deaths occurred at the rate of more than fifty a day, and scores of men performed no other labour than to bury the dead; day and night the city resounded with the solemn tread of the funeral processions, and the wailings of the frightened people as they flocked into the churches and prayed to God not to love them so terribly.

Similar conditions prevailed in 1796 and 1798. In the latter year the population had declined to fewer than thirty thousand souls, and of these more than five thousand succumbed to the dreaded yellow jack. Crowding into other cities, the refugees spread the disease, and throughout the East there was great fright and suffering. The Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, then stationed at Wilmington, Delaware, wrote in his Journal that "the place seems almost desolate, the people have so moved out." Within a month after the appearance of the fever only twenty members of the Methodist congregation remained in the town. The scourge also visited New York, but was less violent than in Philadelphia. Asbury arrived in New York in September 1793, and wrote that "great afflictions prevail here — fevers, fluxes, and influenzas," and that "we have awful accounts from Philadelphia."

But the news from the Pennsylvania metropolis did not surprise him. In his eyes Philadelphia had always been a city of extraordinary ungodliness, with scant respect for Methodist doctrine and less for Methodist preachers, although, curiously enough, it had always been a stronghold of the faith, and reported large Methodist congregations. On several occasions he had gloomily prophesied that in due time the hand of God would fall heavily upon this modern Babylon. Only a few months before the fever became epidemic, he preached in Ebenezer Church, the second house erected in Philadelphia by the Methodists, and was exceedingly wroth when his services were disturbed by hoodlums; small boys clamoured at the church doors, and, outside, the sinners kept the streets in an uproar. When he knelt to pray, no one, not even the Lord, could hear him. He was convinced that the disturbance was instigated by Satan, and when he went to his lodgings that night, he dipped his pen in prophetic ink and recorded the fate of Philadelphia:

> This is a wicked, horribly wicked city, and if the people do not reform, I think they will be let loose upon one another, or else God will send pestilence among them, and slay them by the hundreds and thousands; the spirit of prayer has departed, and the spiritual watchmen have ceased to cry aloud among all sects and denominations; for their unfaithfulness they will be smitten in anger; for sleepy silence in the house of God, which ought to resound with the voice of praise and frequent prayer, the Lord will visit their streets with the silence of desolation.[1]

Less than a year later he rode into Philadelphia and saw the fulfilment of his prophecy; pestilence had, indeed, come upon the city, and the people were being slain by the hundreds and thousands, and in the streets was now the silence of despair and desolation. "Ah!" wrote Asbury. "How the ways mourn! How low-spirited are the people whilst making their escape! I found it awful, indeed. I judge the people die from fifty to one hundred a day; some of our friends are dying; others flying. The streets are now depopulated, and the city wears a gloomy aspect. Poor Philadelphia! The lofty city! He layeth it low!"[2]

Asbury arrived in Philadelphia on Friday, and immediately sent out word that on the following Sunday he would preach several helpful sermons, on texts particularly applicable to the plague and the terrible plight in which the people found themselves through their sinful ways. His first discourse was delivered in St. George's, and the church was packed to the doors by a vast congregation eager to hear the holy communication. He preached on Isaiah lviii.1: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." In the afternoon he went to

Ebenezer Meeting-house, where another huge crowd awaited him, impatient for the soothing message of the loving God. He preached on Micah vi.9: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." That night he wrote in his Journal: "The people of this city are alarmed, and well they may be."[3]

The next Tuesday was designated by Asbury as a Day of Humiliation, and he called upon the people to repent of their sins, strongly intimating that unless they did so there would be no hope for them in the hereafter. The morning of the day he spent in prayer, and in the afternoon mounted the pulpit in St. George's, where he discoursed to an audience which he described as a "large and very serious, weeping congregation." His text was from 1 Kings viii.37–40: "If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be," etc. Having thus comforted the frightened Philadelphians, he left the city "solemn as death," and rode south. He arrived in Maryland in time to attend a quarterly meeting at Cross Roads, near the border, and opened the session with a sermon on "Yea, in the ways of thy judgments have we waited for thee." "I showed," he wrote, "1. That God sent pestilence, famine, locust, blasting, mildew, and caterpillar; and that only the Church and the people of God know and believe his judgments. 2. That God's people waited for him in the way of his judgments. 3. That they improved and profited by them." He went on to Baltimore, passing the guard set a hundred miles from the city against refugees from Philadelphia. "Oh! the plague of sin!" he wrote. "Would to God we were more guarded against its baleful influence!" He was very ill, tired, and feeble, but there were a few cases of fever in Baltimore, and much uneasiness among the people, and he considered it his duty to console them with a message. He therefore preached on Jeremiah xiii.16: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

Energetic measures undertaken by the authorities brought a measure of relief to Philadelphia and when the fever had abated, Asbury returned to the city. But he was still dissatisfied with the spiritual progress of the Philadelphians; he could detect few signs of repentance among them, and he went south again mournfully voicing the conviction that the Lord was not yet through. In 1797 the fever again appeared with great virulence, and some months later, in New York, Asbury wrote:

> I was strongly impressed in my mind months ago that this summer and fall would be marked with heavy afflictions. O Philadelphia! I have had very little faith for that city. I have often remarked the general contempt of the sabbath; the constant noise of carriages; there is a perpetual disturbance of worshipping assemblies. It is true, one event cometh on the righteous and the wicked; but God will stand to his word — he hath punished, he will punish those that rob him. If reports be true, the distress of the Philadelphians is great; three fourths of the citizens are fled.[4]

Ezekiel Cooper had been stationed in Philadelphia by the conference of 1795, and held over in 1796 at the request of the congregations of St. George and Ebenezer. The situation became very alarming in August 1796, and Cooper recorded that great fright again prevailed among the people, and that the doctors had increased the general feeling of depression by writing against each other, and quarrelling about methods of treatment. "The fears of the people," he wrote, "are amazingly wrought upon. I preached seriously upon the subject of the sickness, warning the people to prepare. The terror through this week has caused the people to very much flock out of town; by the last of the month [August] it is believed that one third of the people had moved to the country. The beginning of September the fever increased, and the people kept flying, and by the middle of the month about half the population had removed; some believe two thirds. . . . The deaths are now between twenty and thirty a day — more than thirty died one day. To attempt a full description of the various scenes of distress would be in vain; imagination can scarcely figure out the miseries of many. Even among the well the distresses were truly great; business being so stagnated that the poor were out of employ, many were, consequently, deprived of the means which brought them the necessities of life. Had not the public, by legislative authority, made an appropriation of $10,000, the poor might, many of them, have been entirely destitute of a mouthful of bread. Oh, to think! A family, a mother and house full of children, with tears and sorrow, lamenting their fate — not being able to leave the place, nor to procure a piece of bread to satisfy their hunger." [5]

When Asbury, then in New Hampshire, heard of this terrible visitation, he wrote in his Journal:

> It is awful in Philadelphia; it seemeth as if the Lord would humble or destroy that city, by stroke after stroke, until they acknowledge God.[6]

Thus was the wrath visited upon the City of Brotherly Love. And in much the same manner, and for a similar reason, was vengeance wreaked upon Boston. Asbury found the inhabitants of that stronghold of Puritanism wicked and inhospitable when he made his first visit there in 1791, and they did not improve on more extended acquaintance. In 1798, when the fever appeared in Boston, Asbury recorded in his Journal:

> We hear of a serious mortal fever prevailing in Boston; it is what I have feared would be the visitation of this capital town as in other cities; here also are theatres, sinners, blind priests and backsliding, formal people, and multitudes who are Gospel-hardened.[7]

2

The most frequent record in Asbury's Journal is " I preached," and probably no man ever preached oftener, not even the great horror-mongers of Scripture. The number of words he uttered for the Lord is simply beyond computation. During his American ministry alone he delivered no fewer than 18,000 sermons, and offered at least 80,000 public and private prayers. He ordained more than 4,000 preachers, baptized thousands of the faithful, and assisted other thousands to eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus, accompanying all of these episcopal activities with a constant flow of words. But he never became a really great preacher, although he was a powerful and gifted exhorter, and when he had lashed himself into an evangelistic frenzy, his screaming threats and denunciations caused sinners to tremble and beg for mercy. The evil ones were occasionally prostrated by the shock of his revelations, but he lacked the holy gifts of other great Methodists, and so was unable to inspire his hearers to the fits, frothings at the mouth, barks, jerks, jumps, holy dancing, and other physical phenomena which accompanied the preaching of the Wesleys and George Whitefield in England, and of Benjamin Abbott, Robert Williams, Lorenzo Dow, and others in America. Nor could he perform the profusion of miracles that set them apart as men upon whom the Lord had bestowed magical powers; his only recorded wonder-working of importance was the Miracle of the Gracious Rain. This occurred at Lynn, Massachusetts, on Sunday, July 20, 1800, and is thus described in his Journal:

> There had been a long drought here, and nature seemed as if she were about to droop and die. We addressed the throne of Grace most fervently and solemnly, and had showers of blessings. Whilst I was preaching, the wind came up and appeared to whirl round to every point, and most gracious rain came on; this I considered as a most signal instance of divine goodness.[8]

Asbury's Journal gives the outlines of nearly two hundred sermons, and the texts of some seven hundred others. His great knowledge of the Bible enabled him to prepare his talks with great accuracy, and he always preached close to his text. But when he exhorted, he resorted to typically Methodist invective and denunciation; hell and damnation were terrible realities to him, and he used them as a club to belabour his flocks along the path of righteousness. He rejoiced to see his congregations writhing and groaning in emotional torment, such sufferings being accepted as a true sign of God's love and goodness. Many of his texts were peculiarly designed to strike terror to his hearers, and were chosen for that purpose. In his early days he preached principally from the Old Testament, glorying in its horrors and unmentionable cruelties, but in later years the New Testament was the source of his most important sermons, except when he wished to prophesy as well as preach. He then resorted to the howling threats of Isaiah and Jeremiah. His favourite text was 1 Timothy i.15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

The Rev. Henry Maynard, an early itinerant who often heard Asbury preach, wrote that he was dignified, eloquent, and impressive, delivering his sermons with great authority and gravity. Another Methodist preacher said that as a theologian Asbury had few equals. The Rev. Henry Boehm described the Asburyan discourses as scripturally rich, and pronounced him a good Bible expositor. "He could be a son of thunder and of consolation," wrote Boehm, "and he was great at camp-meetings, on funeral occasions and at ordinations." The Rev. Joshua Marsden wrote that Asbury was not an orator, but that his sermons were the result of sound wisdom and good sense, and were "delivered with great authority and gravity, often attended with divine unction, which made them as refreshing as the dew of heaven."

The Rev. Nicholas Snethen, who travelled with Asbury for many years and was called the Bishop's "silver trumpet," preached a memorial sermon after Asbury's death, and gave this estimate of his preaching:

> In devotion he affected no concealment; he was professedly and habitually devout. In this part of his character

> there was nothing doubtful. His prayers on all occasions, in the estimation of his friends, exceeded any compositions of the kind they had ever heard or read. While they had all the perspicuity of studied, written discourses, they seemed to possess the fitness of inspiration to the persons and the subject for whom they were offered up. Those who heard him daily were surprised and delighted with his seemingly inexhaustible fund of devotional material. It is difficult to conceive how any one man could come up nearer to that precept, "Pray without ceasing."
>
> He was a good preacher; he was a better preacher than he was generally supposed to be. The extent of his pulpit resources was not generally known. He was master of the science of his profession. He knew the original languages of the Bible. His mind was stored with the opinions of the most eminent biblical writers and commentators. He was what is called an orthodox preacher; his faith in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ never wavered. He was a practical preacher, never metaphysical or speculative; never wild and visionary; never whining and fastidious. His enunciation was excellent. No exception would be taken to the general purity and dignity of his language. The clear and mellow bass of his deep voice never failed him. But though his pulpit exhibitions were the admiration and delight of those who heard him the most frequently, yet it must be admitted that he was not in general so edifying to strangers. This was owing in part to his laconic and sententious style, and the frequent concealment of his method, and in part also to his impatience of minuteness and detail, which was always heightened by the pressure of disease. He belonged to that class of preachers who are said to wear well; the oftener they are heard, the better they are liked.[9]

Asbury was a man of no learning when he came to America, but by dint of prodigious application, he learned Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and was able to read the Bible in those languages. He was an omnivorous reader, making it a rule of life to read not less than one hundred pages a day. He read a vast deal of sermonic literature, and hundreds of volumes of religious history and biography. He was especially fond of Wesley's *Sermons and Notes,* Whitefield's *Sermons,* and the works of Richard Baxter. And he read the Bible. It is likely that no man ever read it oftener; hardly a day passed that he did not read half a dozen chapters, and much of it he memorized. He once told the Rev. Daniel Asbury that he believed that he had read the Scriptures from cover to cover no fewer that fifty times, and that he could, if pressed, repeat the New Testament from the first word of St. Matthew to the final line of Revelation. But with polite literature he had no acquaintance whatever, holding that such writing was sinful and a waste of time. He once said that he had never opened a secular work. The only exception was a book on etiquette, which he studied diligently, with the result that he was noted for his courtly manners.

He had great ambitions for authorship, most of which he was not able to realize. But he did find time to make a collection of sermons for the preachers, and began a *Short History of the Methodists,* although he did not complete it. He prepared a hymn-book for his numerous flocks, composed principally of the works of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts, and marked about three hundred pages of Baxter's *Reformed Pastor,* intending to publish a reprint of the work. He brought out a small volume called *The Causes, Evils, and Cures of Heart Divisions,* which was made up largely of extracts from the works of Baxter and Jeremiah Burroughs. This was reprinted in 1849 with an introduction by the Rev. Dr. John McClintock, and is very rare. He also wrote a vast quantity of poetry, which he collected with the intention of publishing, but was dissuaded by the Rev. Philip William Otterbein, who read the poems and remarked: "Brother Asbury, I fear you was not born a poet." Asbury immediately burned the manuscript, and none of his verse remains. The most important writings known to be his are his Journals and various holograph letters and documents which are preserved in the collections of Drew Theological Seminary, and are available to selected authors. He also wrote many insertions and additions to the Discipline, and eulogies of deceased preachers, which appeared in the minutes of the annual conferences. The following are good examples:

> Caleb Pedicord, a man of sorrows, and, like his Master, acquainted with grief; but a man dead to the world, and much devoted to God. . . .
>
> John Major, a simple-hearted man, a living, loving soul, who died as he had lived — full of faith and the Holy Ghost; ten years in the work; useful and blameless. . . .
>
> Wyatt Andrews, who died full of faith and the Holy Ghost. As long as he could ride, he travelled, and while he breathed he praised God. . . .
>
> John Cooper, fifteen years in the work, quiet, inoffensive, and blameless; a son of affliction; subject to dejection, sorrow, and suffering; often in want, but too modest to complain till observed and relieved by his friends. He died in peace.

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[1] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 168.

[2] Ibid., p. 206.

[3] Ibid., p. 207.

[4] Ibid., p. 349.

[5] Phoebus: *Beams of Light,* etc., p. 231, et seq.

[6] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 392.

[7] Ibid., p. 387.

[8] Ibid., p. 459.

[9] Atkinson: *History of the Origin,* etc., p. 292, et seq.

CHAPTER XV

Sanctification

I

BY the beginning of the nineteenth century Francis Asbury's work had been practically completed, and his last years were one continual shout of triumph as he received reports of the gigantic victories over Satan which were being won by the toiling prophets in the revival fields. American Methodism had been the puling infant of evangelical religion when he landed at Philadelphia in 1771; it was now a lusty youngster whose holy bawling had been heard from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico; there was scarcely a community in the United States in which religious belief was not directed and controlled, to a greater or lesser degree, by the efficient ecclesiastical machinery which Asbury had erected. In 1800, thirty-four years after Philip Embury had loosed the dogmata of Wesleyanism upon the American continent, the church rolls contained the names of 287 ordained ministers, several thousand local preachers and exhorters, and 64,894 communicants; it was third among the Protestant denominations,[1] and second if those who had followed James O'Kelley into the spiritual wilderness were counted as Methodists. It was exceeded only by the Baptists.

The turn of the century saw the boundaries of Methodism so far flung that it was no longer possible for one man to travel throughout the connexion in a year, and there was every indication that within the immediate future even more territory would be encompassed, for the Church was entering upon one of its periods of greatest growth, both in membership and prestige. As we have noted, a faction inimical to Asbury tried unsuccessfully to elect another bishop at the general conference of 1796. Less than a year later Asbury himself reluctantly reached the conclusion that he could not continue to carry alone the great burden of the episcopacy. Not only was it impossible for him to oversee the vast domain unaided, but his health was so poor that for days and weeks at a time he was compelled to remain in bed, where he dosed himself with medicines and fumed and fretted because he could not preach. The agitation for a junior bishop was renewed as soon as Dr. Coke sailed for England early in 1797, but Asbury would not consent that anyone should be coequal with himself in power and authority. He tried to solve the problem by dispatching a communication to the New England conference at Wilbraham, Massachusetts, instructing the preachers to elect three assistant bishops, who should labour with him and be subject to his orders. He proposed the names of Richard Whatcoat, Francis Poythress, and Jesse Lee, and intended to have the action of the New England itinerants confirmed in turn by the other annual conferences. Lee had gone into Virginia after the general conference, and was considerably chastened by the successive defeats which Asbury had administered to him. Asbury may not have thought that he and Lee could work in harmony together, but by suggesting Lee's election he shrewdly forestalled opposition. Doubtless he reasoned that himself, Whatcoat, and Poythress could keep the insurgent in order, for both Whatcoat and Poythress were his abject admirers.

Asbury visited the Tennessee revival districts in company with Whatcoat after the general conference of 1796, but found the mountain streams overflowed by torrential rains, and the exposure and hardship of fording them greatly aggravated his illness. His friends implored him to turn back, but he replied that the Lord was testing him, and pushed on with cries of holy torment. He had intended to go also into Kentucky and thence northward through western Pennsylvania, for he yearned to behold the sacred flame with which the sinners of those territories were being seared. But in March 1797 he became so ill that he could no longer ride, and since it was impracticable to employ other means of transportation on the mountain trails, he was loaded into a chaise, and with an escort of preachers set out for Baltimore. " From the 9th of April to the 27th of May I have kept no Journal," he wrote. " The notes of our travels and troubles taken by Jonathan Bird and Joshua Wells will tell a small part of my sorrows and sufferings. I have travelled about six hundred miles with an inflammatory fever, and a fixed pain in my breast." On June 10 he arrived in Baltimore, and lodged at the home of a Methodist about a mile from the city. There he " lounged away a week in visiting." He tried to preach the following Sunday, and mourned that he could talk but fifteen minutes. His friends put him back to bed and showered him with kindness, but he cried out that he was a " worthless lump of misery and sin," unworthy of so much attention. So he was again carried into Baltimore, where he tottered happily about among the sinners and the Methodists, preaching, praying, and organizing. On June 25 he wrote:

> I met the male members of the society sabbath morning, as I had met the sisters and the official members the preceding week. I obtained the liberty of the managers of the African academy to congregate the fathers as well as to teach the children. We had nearly five hundred coloured people. . . . In the afternoon I gave a short exhortation at Mr. Otterbein's church, on Howard's Hill. I am now waiting for the making of a sulky. Thomas Barber, from Birmingham, England, took a second likeness of me, at the desire of my mother, to send to England. I am trying to organize the African church. I made interest for the use of Mr. Otterbein's church for sabbath, in the morning and evening for the white people. I have attempted to promote society meetings at Old Town and the west end of the city, either at the Dunker's meeting-house or Mr. Otterbein's church. My feelings or fears premonish me that this will be a sickly summer. I visit, dine, and ride out every day, but it is very hard work for me to eat, drink, talk, and do nothing. As I am not a man of the world, the most of the conversation about it is irksome to me. I am taken from house to house, and the brethren wish the pleasure of seeing me, and those who are acquainted

> with their families will come to see me also. . . . I cannot now, as heretofore, spend ten hours out of sixteen in reading the Bible in English or Hebrew, or other books, or write letters from morning until night. My bow is weak, if not broken; but I have more time to speak to God and souls.[2]

It was soon after he arrived in Baltimore that Asbury wrote to the New England preachers and directed the election of Whatcoat, Lee, and Poythress, and as his health improved, he decided to attend the conference and see to it that his orders were carried out. Accordingly he set out through Delaware and Pennsylvania, and about the middle of August reached Philadelphia. From there he rode to Germantown "to see aged Mother Steel and Sister Lusby, and found freedom, although I could hardly walk or talk; yet must needs speak to the women of the house about their souls." He was compelled to go to bed when he returned to Philadelphia, but in three days staggered to his feet and set out through New Jersey, and finally arrived in New York late in August. There he was so ill that for several days he could not move, but as soon as his fever abated he was again astride his horse and pushing northward into Westchester. He rode as far as the village of Kingsbridge, now within the limits of Greater New York, where he collapsed and was in bed for two weeks. As soon as he could stir abroad, he resumed his travels, but fainted while passing through New Rochelle and was carried into the Sherwood mansion. "Finding myself swelling in the face, bowels, and feet," he wrote, "I applied leaves of burdock, and then a plaster of mustard, which drew a desperate blister. I had such awful sore feet, I knew not that they would mortify, and only after two weeks was I able to set them to the ground. I took cream of tartar and nitre daily, to cool and keep open the body. I also made use of the bark."

He was still determined to get to Wilbraham, and on September 11, after he had found himself able to walk twice across his sick-room, he was lifted to his horse and lashed to the saddle. But travelling was torture to him, and after a few hours he could go no farther, and was put to bed in a farm-house. " I now began to conclude," he wrote, " that it was not the will of God that I should proceed, and the brethren would not persuade me to go. My mind is stayed upon God, and I hope to be more holy." The next day he returned to New Rochelle, and determined to rest until October. But he soon changed his mind; within a few days he was up and about, visiting the Methodists throughout the Westchester district. But he could not preach, pray aloud, or exhort, and so was miserable. " It is now eight weeks since I have preached," he wailed. " Awfully dumb sabbaths! I have been most severely tried from various quarters; my fevers, my feet, and Satan, would set in with my gloomy and nervous affections. . . . I am left too much alone. I cannot sit in my room all day, making gloomy reflections upon the past, present, and future life. Lord, help me, for I am poor and needy; the hand of God hath touched me, and I think Satan forts himself in my melancholy, unemployed, unsocial, and inactive hours." But a few days later he was able to mount his horse, and rode nine miles for recreation. " The clouds are dispelled from my mind," he wrote. " Oh, that my future life may be holiness to the Lord — prudent and exemplary to many. I wished to speak to a poor African whom I saw in the field as I went out; and as I came along on my return, he was at a stone wall within eight or nine feet of me. Poor creature! He seemed struck at my counsel, and gave me thanks. Oh, it was going down into the Egypt of South Carolina after those poor souls of Africans that I have lost my health, if not my life in the end. The will of the Lord be done."

Asbury had sent Joshua Wells to represent him at the Wilbraham conference, and during the last week in October Wells returned to New Rochelle, accompanied by Jesse Lee. They brought the news that the preachers had declined to obey Asbury's instructions to elect three assistant bishops, holding that it would be contrary to the Discipline. Asbury's comment in his Journal was: " Matters were conducted well." It is quite probable that he was not displeased at the action of the New England itinerants, for neither then nor later was he able to look with equanimity upon the prospect of dividing his powers. Lee rode with him to New York, and after preaching there and scolding the Methodists, they turned southward, and within a few weeks were in Virginia. There they met Dr. Coke, who came through the woods on a borrowed horse with a boy larger than himself riding behind him. He bore a letter from the British Conference, imploring the Americans to release him from his promise to reside in the United States, and permit him to return to England at once. Asbury immediately wrote the English Methodists that only the general conference could legally grant the request, but that " in our own persons and order we consent to his return and partial continuance with you, and earnestly pray that you may have much peace, union, and happiness together." With this authority Dr. Coke sailed for Europe within six months, and was not again in America for two years.

During the remainder of 1797 and throughout the next two years Asbury's labours were colossal. He was frightfully ill, and perhaps a third of the time was spent in bed, but he kept his fingers on the pulse of Methodism, and was in constant and commanding touch with the work in all fields; from his sick-room he dispatched a continual stream of missionaries to wage the never-ending war against Satan. And when he could move, he travelled. In this period he rode or drove some nine thousand miles up and down and across the continent, attending conferences, ordaining preachers, preaching whenever he could, singing, praying, organizing societies and Sunday schools, and settling and supervising the work of the church membership and the itinerancy. He was accompanied sometimes by one preacher, and again by three or four, and the group of ecstatic religionists formed a pentecostal procession that attracted great attention throughout the country.

Richard Whatcoat travelled with Asbury during the latter part of 1799, and together they staggered into Charleston for the South Carolina conference on the first day of the new century, Whatcoat with a painful ulcer on each leg, and Asbury with his throat and stomach filled with sores and his chest burning with bronchitis and incipient consumption. He rested in Charleston a month after this session, and then started north to make his episcopal rounds. "One of my friends wanted to borrow or beg fifty pounds of me," he wrote. "He might as well have asked for Peru. I showed him all the money I had in the world — about twelve dollars — and gave him five; strange, that neither my friends nor my enemies will believe that I neither have, nor seek, bags of money; well, they shall believe by demonstration, what I have ever been striving to prove — that I will live and die a poor man." He and Whatcoat were in Virginia in March of 1800, but the country had been flooded with torrential rains, and not a person came to their meeting near the Westford Ford. So they preached to each other at noon, and in the evening practised upon the family at whose house they lodged.

When Asbury left Charleston, his objective was the general conference in Baltimore on May 6. He rode into the Maryland city on April 26, and found the preachers already gathering from all parts of the Methodist realm. "The great accounts of the work of God in various parts," he wrote, "are as cordials to my soul. I am persuaded that upon exact measurement I have travelled 1,100 miles from the 10th of February to the 27th of April; my horse is poor and my carriage greatly racked." And his spirit was greatly racked, also; he was very melancholy and depressed, and discouraged by his illness and the gigantic tasks which confronted him on every side. Nor was his peace of mind increased by the presence of the energetic Jesse Lee, busily agitating for the election of another bishop. Asbury was willing that this should be done, but he did not want Jesse Lee elevated to the episcopacy, nor anyone else who would insist upon an equality of power. He held firmly to the belief that whoever was chosen should be his assistant, and to counteract Lee's vigorous campaigning resorted to characteristic methods. Calling the leaders of the itinerancy into conference, he addressed them with great emotion, describing his sufferings in the cause and displaying his resignation, which he said he had prepared for presentation to the general conference. The preachers were profoundly impressed and prevailed upon him to destroy the document, and the first action of the conference was to adopt a resolution entreating Asbury to remain at the head of the Church, and advising him to temper his labours to his health.

Asbury made no effort to prevent the election, but defeated several resolutions which provided that the new bishop should be his equal in power. Jesse Lee was the outstanding candidate, for with the exception of Asbury he was the best known and the ablest Methodist preacher on the continent, but the itinerants were reminded that he and Asbury had never worked together in harmony, and that if he were elected there would doubtless be constant conflict, and the work of the connexion would suffer. The manifold excellencies of Richard Whatcoat, hitherto unthought of as a candidate, were impressed upon the preachers, and when the first vote was counted, he was tied with Jesse Lee. Asbury was asked to indicate a preference, but Methodist historians say that he refused to do so. Nevertheless, on the second ballot Whatcoat was elected, with fifty-nine votes against fifty-five for Lee. The latter and his friends held Asbury responsible for his defeat, and there was much bitterness. In later years Lee wrote Asbury a letter in which he accused the Bishop of thwarting him at every turn, and of unfairly hindering his legitimate ambitions. This missive has never been published, and probably never will be, although it would undoubtedly throw much light upon the frequent controversies of early Methodism, in which Lee and Asbury were central figures.[3]

Besides electing another bishop, this conference increased the salaries of the itinerants from $64 to $80 a year. Dr. Coke appeared before the preachers with the petition for his return to England, and the conference agreed to " lend " the Doctor to the British Conference on condition that he return to the United States in time for the general conference of 1804. Throughout the session all Baltimore was in the throes of a revival. The excitement began at the home of William Bruff, whose wife had been a staunch sister for many years, and soon spread to the churches and into other homes. " Christ the Lord is come to reign in Baltimore," optimistically wrote Henry Boehm, who preached constantly for a week. " The Lord is at work in all parts of the town." Preachers and laymen paraded from Bruff's house to the churches, singing and shouting and arousing such excitement that, as in 1789, crowds followed them, marvelling at the miracles of the Methodists. " The unction that attended the word was very great," wrote Asbury. " More than one hundred souls, at different times and places, professed conversion during the sitting of the conference."

Asbury's health improved slightly while he was in Baltimore, and as soon as the conference adjourned, he started another tour of the continent, accompanied by Bishop Whatcoat, Nicholas Snethen, Jesse Lee, and others. He viewed the results of the episcopal election with great satisfaction. Whatcoat was a good preacher and a man of the most extraordinary holiness, who seemed constantly to be on the verge of performing miracles, but he was proverbially impractical, of an ascetic temperament, and possessed no organizing or governing ability. He and Asbury had been intimate friends since their early itinerant days in England, and Asbury had always been the dominant personality. Throughout his service as bishop, Whatcoat was never anything more than an assistant and official chaplain to Asbury. He visited the annual conferences and preached as often as possible, but Asbury continued to station the preachers and administer the affairs of the Church; he was in sole command of Methodism after Whatcoat's election as well as before.

The episcopal party attended the Delaware and Virginia annual conferences, and in the latter part of the summer of 1800 Asbury and Whatcoat, accompanied by William McKendree, Presiding Elder of the Kentucky district, made their way across the mountains and held the western conference at Bethel, Kentucky. There McKendree was placed in command of the Methodist outposts in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Later his authority extended over the whole of the western territory and southward to the Natchez settlements in Mississippi. Asbury and Whatcoat returned east through Tennessee, and in 1801 the former made another horseback journey to the west, escorted by Nicholas Snethen, and again in 1802. "We came upon Holston," he wrote, "and lo, the rage of wild and Christian savages is tamed, and God hath glorified himself. Sweet peace fills my mind, and glorious prospects of Zion's prosperity cheer my heart."

Both McKendree and Snethen accompanied him on these tours, and every member of the party suffered terribly. Snethen was thrown from his horse and so badly injured that he was left lame upon the road, to hobble the best he could to the nearest settlement, while Asbury and McKendree pushed on to save sinners. Asbury was so ill and feeble that he could scarcely cling to his horse, and on the rougher trails was lashed to the saddle, while McKendree rode close alongside to catch him if the rope slipped.

"I have been sick for twenty-three days," Asbury wrote. "Ah! the tale of woe I might relate. My dear McKendree had to lift me up and down from my horse, like a helpless child. For my sickness and sufferings I conceive I am indebted to sleeping uncovered in the wilderness. I passed so quickly along that many people scarcely more than beheld me with their eyes, yet these were witness to my groans. I could not have slept but for the aid of laudanum."

In 1803 Asbury preached in Pittsburgh for the first time, after traversing the entire State of Pennsylvania and establishing Methodist societies and Sunday schools throughout the interior. "I feel, and have felt for thirty-two years," he wrote, "for Pennsylvania, the most wealthy and the most careless about God and the things of God; but I hope God will shake the state and the churches. . . . I feel wholly given up to do or suffer the will of God, to be sick or well, and to live or die at any time and in any place. Glory be to God for such resignation! I have little to leave, except a journey of 5,000 miles a year, the care of more than 100,000 souls, and the arrangement of about 400 preachers yearly, to which I may add the murmurs and discontent of ministers and people." In September of this year he first penetrated into Ohio, and was the guest of Governor Tiffin at Chillicothe. He returned with Snethen through Kentucky, where he was entertained by the celebrated Dr. Hinde, who had been a surgeon under General Wolfe at the Battle of Quebec. Before he came in contact with the Methodists, Dr. Hinde was an infidel, and when his wife was converted under the preaching of the Wesleyan itinerants, he promptly pronounced her insane and put a mustard-plaster on her head to draw out the religion. But she was happier blistered than unblistered, and when she implored him to inflict more torture and persecution upon her, the Doctor himself became afflicted with the madness. For many years he kept open house for the Methodist preachers, and was a prominent figure in Kentucky Methodism. Heavy rains greeted Asbury and Snethen when they left Dr. Hinde's, but they pushed joyfully into the bad weather and made their way to Mount Gerizim, Kentucky, where Asbury preached in the woods to two thousand people and the next day held conference. They rode then into Tennessee, and at Claiborne Court-house Asbury set down this account of life along the frontier, and of his episcopal dignities and comforts:

> What a road we have passed! Certainly the worst on the whole continent, even in the best weather; yet, bad as it was, there were four or five hundred crossing the rude hills while we were. I was powerfully struck with the consideration that there were at least as many thousand immigrants annually from east to west; we must take care to send preachers after these people. We have made 1,080 miles from Philadelphia; and now what a detail of suffering I might give, fatiguing to me to write, and perhaps to my friends to read! A man who is well mounted will scorn to complain of the roads, when he sees men, women, and children, almost naked, paddling barefoot and bare-legged along, or labouring up the rocky hills, while those who are best off have only a horse for two or three children to ride at once. If these adventurers have little or nothing to eat, it is no extraordinary circumstance; and not uncommon to encamp in the wet woods after night — in the mountains it does not rain, but pours. I too have my sufferings, perhaps peculiar to myself; pain and temptation; the one of the body and the other of the spirit; no room to retire to — that in which you sit common to all, crowded with

> women and children, the fire occupied by cooking, much and long-loved solitude not to be found, unless you choose to run into the rain in the woods; six months in the year I have had, for thirty-two years, occasionally, to submit to that which will never be agreeable to me; but the people, it must be confessed, are among the kindest souls in the world. Yet kindness will not make a crowded log-cabin, twelve feet by ten, agreeable; without are cold and rain, and within, six adults and as many children, one of which is all motion; the dogs, too, must sometimes be admitted. On Saturday, at Felix Ernest's, I found that among my other trials I had taken the itch; and, considering the filthy houses and filthy beds I have met with in coming from the Kentucky conference, it is perhaps strange that I have not caught it twenty times; I do not see that there is any security against it but by sleeping in a brimstone shirt — poor Bishop! But we must bear it for the elect's sake. My soul is tranquil, the air is pure, and the house of God is near; and Jehovah is nearer.[4]

Dr. Coke returned to the United States late in 1803, and as senior bishop presided over the general conference of 1804, which convened in the Light Street Church in Baltimore on May 7. But Asbury dominated the session; he dictated the business to be transacted, defeated an attempt to abolish the presiding eldership, and as usual made the appointments. Whatcoat took no part in the proceedings except to recommend "the suppression of passion or ill will in debate, and that reason shall rule every loving contest." Jesse Lee was present, but his influence had declined, and he appears not to have interfered with Asbury's plans. Nevertheless, there was much squabbling, and the conference is noted as one of the most quarrelsome in Methodist history; so many angry personalities were exchanged that spectators were finally excluded from the meeting-room, and the preachers then bickered delightfully for seventeen days. Little of importance was accomplished; perhaps the most far-reaching action was the adoption of a rule prohibiting preachers remaining longer than two years in the same station or circuit. There was continual preaching in the Baltimore churches and in many Methodist homes, but the people were apathetic. "The Lord did not own the ministerial labours of the general conference," wrote Asbury. "It was a doubt if any souls were converted. This made us mourn." [5]

2

Richard Whatcoat died on July 5, 1806, at the home of Richard Bassett in Dover, Delaware, and Asbury was once more alone in command of American Methodism, for Dr. Coke had sailed for Europe soon after the general conference of 1804 and was never again in the United States. For two years Asbury dragged his weary, battered body up and down the continent, striving desperately to visit the quarterly meetings and annual conferences and attend to the multitudinous affairs of the Church. But he was not equal to the task. Nor could he have performed such gigantic labours had he been in perfect health, for Methodism had made such tremendous strides since the beginning of the new century that already there was sufficient work for half a dozen bishops if the people in the vast area which had been invaded by the itinerants were to be properly shepherded into heaven. At the conclusion of the general conference of 1804 the church had 113,134 communicants, and 400 ordained ministers, who were preaching not only to their own members but to at least one half of the total American population of some five million. During 1805 Methodism gained 6,000 adherents, and by the end of that year had become the ranking evangelical sect of the United States, a distinction which it has never relinquished.

Asbury's chief fear after the death of Whatcoat was that he might die also, causing a break in the episcopal succession and leaving the church organization at the mercy of men who had opposed his policies. He began making plans to prevent the development of such a situation, and inaugurated a movement in the New York conference for an electoral committee of seven elders from each district, which in turn was to call a general conference for July, 1807, to elect another bishop and devise means for the establishment of a permanent superintendency. The proposition was endorsed by four other annual conferences, but when it came before the Virginia preachers, Jesse Lee leaped upon it with glad cries and defeated it. Asbury had no assistant until the general conference of 1808 elected William McKendree, who for several years had been labouring as head of the western territory. The preachers also provided that future general conferences should be delegated bodies, and passed another milestone in Methodist history by adopting the constitution prepared by Joshua Soule, which is still the basic governing document of Methodism.

The conference of 1808 marked the beginning of the gradual decline of Francis Asbury's power. He noted in his Journal that "dear brother McKendree was elected assistant bishop," for he still balked at the idea of relinquishing any part of his authority, but in fact McKendree was elected associate bishop, and was co-equal with Asbury in all things except the courtesies due seniority. And he soon proved that he intended to have a full share in the administration of the Methodist realm. Within a few months he instituted the custom of consulting the presiding elders before making the preaching appointments, an innovation which Asbury viewed with distrust at first, but later accepted, as he did various changes in the manner of conducting the conferences which McKendree introduced from time to time. However, the fact that McKendree gradually assumed a dominating position in the superintendency did not lessen Asbury's labours; until the day of his death he continued to dash madly back and forth across the United States on a continual round of preaching and praying. He presided at the annual conferences whenever he could reach them, but more and more left the details of government to McKendree.

The preachers wanted Asbury to take a vacation after the conference, for his physical condition was frightful, and many feared that his mind had been affected by constant hardship and labour. But he refused and, after preaching the funeral sermon of his old friend Harry Dorsey Gough, set out with Henry Boehm on a tour which carried him through Maryland, Ohio, parts of the new territory of Indiana, and thence through Kentucky and Tennessee, his objective being the Tennessee conference in the Cumberland region. He suffered terribly in the mountains and the western wilderness, and frequently fell exhausted from his horse, or collapsed in the sulky with which he buried the monotony of riding, and Boehm carried him in his arms into a farm-house. Rheumatism assailed his legs, and he raised a huge blister on each knee, the result being that for several months he had to hobble about on crutches. In this condition he traversed the rough trails of the Alleghenies and braved the perils of the frontier. In the greater part of the country he was kindly received, even by those settlers who were not Methodists and opposed the Wesleyan doctrines. But sometimes he was refused lodging, and again he would not stop at the house of a family which was obviously ungodly, preferring the danger and discomforts of the forest. "I called at a certain house," he wrote. "It would not do. I was compelled to turn out again to the pelting of the wind and the rain. Though old, I have eyes. The hand of God will come upon them. As for the young lady, shame and contempt will fall on her. Mark the event."

Asbury now began to spend a portion of each winter in the South, and often visited the Rev. Daniel Asbury in Lincoln County, North Carolina, to whom he gave a Bible and a watch.[6] He was also a frequent guest in the homes of Governor Tiffin of Ohio, Governor Van Cortlandt of New York, and Freeborn Garrettson, who had married a wealthy woman and thus become the owner of a magnificent mansion overlooking the Hudson, which he called Travellers' Rest and opened to all Methodist preachers. But Asbury could not remain long in one place; despite his physical ailments he was restless and yearned to be constantly on the move. He travelled without any definite plan after the general conference of 1812, and was in motion so long as he could drag one foot after the other, and frequently when he couldn't. Henry Boehm accompanied him on a tour of the South during this year, and wrote that he had never been more feeble, or less able to travel:

> Yet he would go on. There was only one thing that could stop him — the pale horse and his rider. Having lost the

> use of one of his feet by rheumatism, I had to carry him in my arms and place him in his sulky, and then take him out and carry him into a church or private dwelling, and he would sit and preach. At Fayetteville [North Carolina] I carried him into the church, and he preached from Zephaniah ix.12. After the sermon he ordained three persons. He had one blister on him, and I carried him to our host, who put on three more. He travelled in great misery. At Wilmington I carried him into the church, and he preached in the morning, and then met the society; and that not being enough for a sick, old, infirm bishop, he must preach again in the evening. After this he was in such misery that a poultice was applied to mitigate the pain. The next day we rode twenty-four miles.[7]

During the last few years of Asbury's life his travels through the domain of Methodism were triumphal processions. He was by now the best-known man in the United States, and wherever he went great crowds assembled to see him and hear him preach; he was entertained by mayors and governors, and when he visited a capital city during session of the legislature, he was invited to address the statesmen. He even preached before the House of Representatives in Washington, but apparently without appreciable effect. Methodists throughout America, contemplating the results of his labours, regarded him with awe and veneration, and it was not uncommon for a congregation to burst into tears as he tottered or was carried into a church; he was a pathetic figure with his snow-white hair falling in shaggy ringlets about his shoulders, and his face deeply lined with the seams and wrinkles wrought by a half century of hardship and illness, and frantic labours for the Methodist God.

On these journeys Asbury was accompanied by an elder chosen by the general conference as his travelling companion, as well as by an escort of preachers. No longer able to retain his seat astride a horse, he rode in a rickety sulky drawn by an ancient grey mare, with his head bowed and his lips moving in prayer or song. But his eyes were shut, for the scenery had become an old story to him, and he wrote that " I must keep my eyes for the Bible." Beside him sat his chaplain, ready to catch him if he collapsed from pain or the heat. Behind and before the sulky rode the escort of itinerants, generally headed by the presiding elder through whose territory the Bishop was travelling. The holy *entourage* moved slowly along the rough country roads, for the slightest jolting of the sulky caused Asbury intolerable pain. As they travelled, the preachers sang hymns and shouted hosannas to the Methodist God, in which Asbury joined with his broken, aged voice. Whenever a Methodist church was sighted, he was lifted from the sulky and carried into the pulpit, where he preached and exhorted until he was exhausted. He constantly scolded his preachers for their frailties and faults, and to the last urged a celibate ministry. " All our preachers have wives and homes," he mourned, " and must run to their dears every night."

As he grew older Asbury became more and more concerned with his own salvation. He retained but slight interest in secular matters, and even the War of 1812 scarcely impinged upon his consciousness; there is but one reference to the conflict in his Journal, and that an expression of sorrow at the burning of the Capitol in Washington. He had but one subject for his discourses. " I was divinely impressed," he wrote, " to preach sanctification in every sermon." He cried out constantly to God to make him holy and give him a sign of acceptance. " I groan one minute with pain and shout glory the next," he wrote. " I look back on a martyr's life of toil and privation and pain, and I am ready for a martyr's death. O Lord, give me souls and keep me holy! " More than ever before he was the victim of alternating periods of exultation and depression; sometimes he felt the bliss of sanctification and burst into glad shouts, but again he was certain that God planned to plunge him into the lowest depths of hell. Melancholia gripped him, and he became stern and forbidding. " There was never a person on earth that I was afraid of as of Bishop Asbury," wrote John Wesley Bond, who was his travelling companion during his last year. " There was an air of sternness about him that forbade anyone approaching him. You must wait his time."

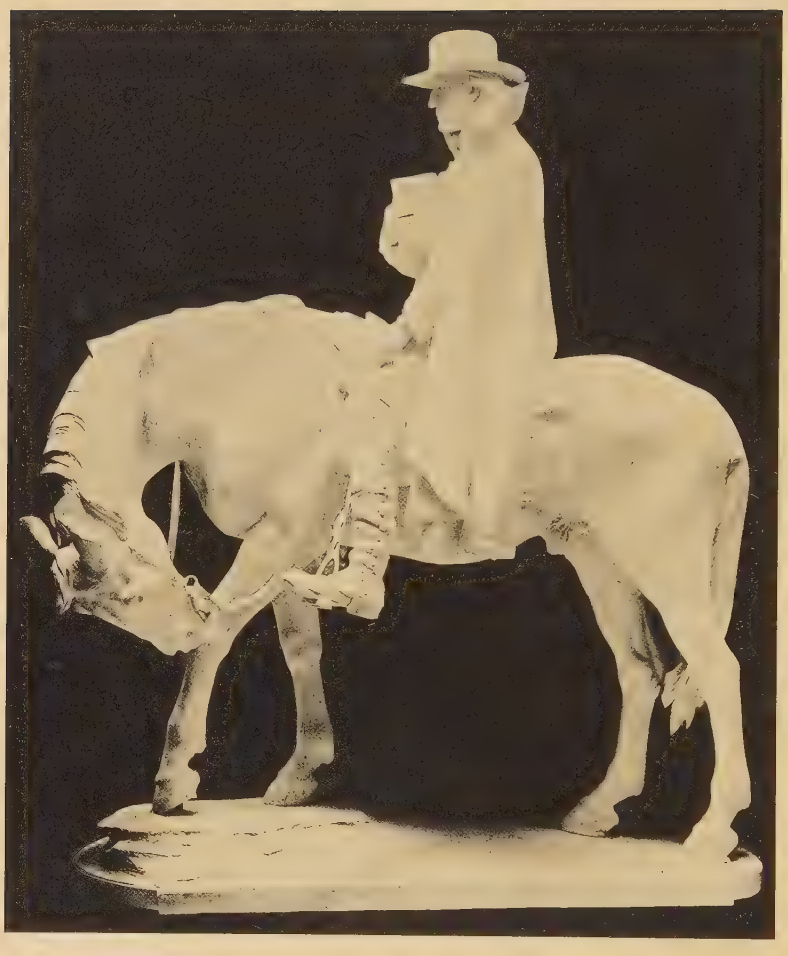
Asbury made his will in June 1813, appointing as executors

Bishop McKendree, Henry Boehm, and Daniel Hitt. "If I do not in the mean time spend it," he wrote, "I shall leave, when I die, an estate of two thousand dollars, I believe; I give it all to the Book Concern. This money, and somewhat more, I have inherited from departed Methodist friends, in the State of Maryland, who died childless; besides some legacies which I have never taken. Let it all return, and continue to aid the cause of piety."

3

On his seventieth birthday, August 20, 1815, Asbury was at Chillicothe, Ohio, where he preached on Luke xxii.61 in the Methodist chapel erected by Governor Tiffin. He found the Methodists in the new state displaying an avid interest in politics, and expressed his disapproval. "Ah!" he wrote. "Let us take heed that party and politics do not drive out all our piety; they do not mingle well. . . . The time is coming when all kings and rulers must acknowledge the reign of the King of kings, or feel the rod of the Son of God. But will forms do for the United States of America? Foolish people will think they have a right to govern themselves as they please; ay, and Satan will help them. Will this do for us? Is not this republic, this land, this people, the Lord's? We acknowledge no king but the eternal King. And if our great men will not rule in righteousness, but forget God and Christ, what will be the consequence? Ruin."

In company with John Wesley Bond, Asbury left Chillicothe in a rain-storm and rode to Mechanicsburg, where he preached several times at a camp-meeting. He presided over the Ohio conference at Lebanon, and then made his way to Cincinnati, where he met Bishop McKendree, who was recovering from a fractured leg, received in a fall from his horse. "We had a long and earnest talk about the affairs of our Church and my future prospects," wrote Asbury. "I told him my opinion was that the western part of the empire would be the glory of America for the poor and pious, and that it ought to be marked out for five conferences. I told my colleague that, having passed the first allotted period



Statue of Francis Asbury, by Augustus Lukeman,
in Washington, D. C.

(seventy years), and being, as he knew, out of health, it could not be expected that I could visit the extremities every year, presiding in eight, it might be twelve, conferences and travelling six thousand miles in eight months. If I were able to keep up with the conferences, I could not be expected to preside in more than every other one." He was now ready to surrender entire control of the church to McKendree, and on October 20, at the Tennessee conference in Wilson County, pronounced his valedictory:

> My eyes fail. I will resign the stations to Bishop McKendree; I will take away my feet. It is my fifty-fifth year of ministry, and the forty-fifth year of labour in America. My mind enjoys great peace and divine consolation. My health is better, but whether health, life, or death, good is the will of the Lord. I will trust him, yea, and will praise him. He is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Glory! Glory! Glory![8]

On crutches, with his body almost covered by blisters and with senile consumption ravaging his chest, Asbury set his face toward the east, determined to attend the South Carolina conference in Charleston and make a final effort to save that sink of sin, where he had often recorded that religion was not fashionable. He had now found the sanctification which he had sought so frantically for more than sixty years. "I live in God from moment to moment," he wrote, and "I die daily; I am made perfect by labour and suffering." Shouting, singing hymns, and preaching at every opportunity, he passed slowly through eastern Tennessee into North Carolina, where he rested a few days at Daniel Asbury's home and began a message to the Methodists which was read to the general conference of 1816 after his death, and in which he discussed at length the affairs of the Church and the divine inspiration of the Wesleyan episcopacy. From Daniel Asbury's he made his way into South Carolina, and after much suffering arrived in Columbia. There he saw that it would be impossible for him to reach Charleston in time for the conference, so he abandoned that city to its fate and turned north, his new objective being the general conference, which was to assemble in Baltimore on May 2, 1816. But he was destined never again to preside over a gathering of his preachers. He struggled through the rain to Granby, a small village in the central part of South Carolina, and there on December 7, 1815, made the last entry in his Journal:

> We met a storm, and stopped at William Baker's, Granby.

He was dying, but he would not be still. He remained but a few days at Granby, and then set out with Bond in a closed carriage, eager to get to Baltimore. The consumption from which he suffered, and the gigantic blisters which he constantly applied, were now aggravated by a severe attack of bronchitis and influenza. But he pushed on, preaching two and three times a day, and on March 24, 1816, rode into Richmond, Virginia, almost blind and unable to walk. But he insisted that the Lord had entrusted him with a message to the Virginians, and his friends carried him into the old Methodist church. There he sat on a table and preached his last sermon, from Romans ix.28: "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." He was frequently compelled to stop for breath, and much of his sermon was rambling and incoherent, but he spoke with great emotion, and the congregation was in tears when he was carried out, almost unconscious, and placed in his sulky. The next day he rested, and the Richmond Methodists begged him to spend his last hours under their care, but he had an obsession that the Lord had appeared to him and commanded him to preach at Fredericksburg, Virginia. Thither he started, and after four days' painful travelling reached the home of George Arnold, in Spottsylvania, twenty miles from his destination. There he collapsed and was put to bed. He grew worse, but would not permit a physician to be called, and himself added more blisters to the ones which already tortured him at every move. He lingered until the following Sunday morning, and then called the members of the Arnold family together and led them in worship. He took for his text the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, and attempted to preach. But he could not see to read, and he was so weak that he could speak only a few sentences. Bond began to read from the Bible, and as he slowly intoned the Word, Asbury raised both hands above his head and died, at four o'clock in the afternoon of March 31, 1816.

He was buried in the Arnold family cemetery, but when the general conference convened in May, a committee, headed by John Wesley Bond, was sent to superintend the removal of the body to Baltimore. There it lay in state in the Light Street Church, while outside great throngs of weeping Methodists packed the streets. The funeral was held on the morning of May 10, 1816, and the body was carried at the head of a procession numbering more than twenty thousand persons, who marched eight abreast behind the coffin to the Eutaw Street Church, where Asbury was interred in a vault beneath the pulpit. His body remained there until June 1854, when it was put in its final resting-place in Mount Olivet Cemetery. Less than six months later Jesse Lee died and was buried near him.

On October 15, 1924, more than a hundred years after his death, an equestrian statue of Francis Asbury was unveiled in Washington, with a dedicatory address by President Coolidge. "A great lesson has been taught us by this holy life," said the President. "It was because of what Bishop Asbury and his associates preached, and what other religious organizations through their ministry preached, that our country has developed so much freedom."[9]

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[1] Dorchester: *Christianity in the United States*, p. 733.

[2] Asbury: *Journal;* Vol. II, p. 345.

[3] In his work on Asbury, p. 180, Bishop Dubose says the letter "is in my possession while these pages are being written. . . . It has passed through the hands of at least two great historians of Methodism, who . . . treated it as private; I shall not presume to do otherwise."

[4] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. IV, p. 164.

[5] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 546.

[6] They were bequeathed to Daniel Asbury's sons, Rev. William Morris Asbury and Rev. Henry Asbury. The watch is still in possession of descendants of the latter, but the Bible was destroyed by Yankee troops who burned William Asbury's home in Mississippi, during the Civil War.

[7] Stevens: *History of the M. E. Church;* Vol. IV, p. 238.

[8] Tipple: *Heart of Asbury's Journal*, p. 702.

[9] New York *Times*, October 16, 1924, p. 27.

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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APPENDIX

Correspondence among members of the Wesley family about the remarkable antics of the Epworth goblin

*

To Samuel Wesley, from his mother.

Dear Sam, January 12, 1716–17.
This evening we were agreeably surprised with your packet, which brought the welcome news of your being alive, after we had been in the greatest panic imaginable, almost a month, thinking either you was dead, or one of your brothers by some misfortune been killed.

The reason of our fears is as follows. On the first of December our maid heard, at the door of the dining-room, several dismal groans, like a person in extremes, at the point of death. We gave little heed to her relation, and endeavoured to laugh her out of her fears. Some nights (two or three) after, several of the family heard a strange knocking in divers places, usually three or four knocks at a time, and then stayed a little. This continued every night for a fortnight; sometimes it was in the garret, but most commonly in the nursery, or green chamber. We all heard it but your father, and I was not willing he should be informed of it, lest he should fancy it was against his own death, which, indeed, we all apprehended. But when it began to be so troublesome, both day and night, that few or none of the family durst be alone, I resolved to tell him of it, being minded he should speak to it. At first he would not believe but somebody did it to alarm us; but the night after, as soon as he was in bed, it knocked loudly nine times, just by his bed-side. He rose, and went to see if he could find out what it was, but could see nothing. Afterward he heard it as the rest.

One night it made such a noise in the room over our heads, as if several people were walking, then run up and down stairs, and was so outrageous that we thought the children would be frightened; so your father and I rose and went down in the dark to light a candle. Just as we came to the bottom of the broad stairs, having hold of each other, on my side there seemed as if somebody had emptied a bag of money at my feet; and on his, as if all the bottles under the stairs (which were many) had been dashed in a thousand pieces. We passed through the hall into the kitchen and got a candle and went to see the children whom we found asleep.

The next night your father would get Mr. Hoole to lie at our house, and we all sat together till one or two o'clock in the morning and heard the knocking as usual. Sometimes it would make a noise like the winding up of a jack; at other times, as that night Mr. Hoole was with us, like a carpenter planing deals; but most commonly it knocked thrice and stopped, and then thrice again, and so many hours together. We persuaded your father to speak, and try if any voice would be heard. One night about six o'clock he went into the nursery in the dark, and at first heard several deep groans, then knocking. He adjured it to speak if it had power, and tell him why it troubled his house, but no voice was heard, but it knocked thrice aloud. Then he questioned it if it were Sammy, and bid it, if it were and could not speak, knock again, but it knocked no more that night, which made us hope it was not against your death.

Thus it continued till the 28th of December, when it loudly knocked (as your father used to do at the gate) in the nursery and departed. We have various conjectures what this may mean. For my own part, I fear nothing now you are safe at London hitherto, and I hope God will still preserve you. Though sometimes I am inclined to think my brother is dead. Let me know your thoughts on it. S. W.

From Mrs. Wesley to her son Samuel.

Dear Sam, January 25 or 27, 1716–17.

Though I am not one of those that will believe nothing supernatural, but am rather inclined to think there would be frequent intercourse between good spirits and us did not our deep lapse into sensuality prevent it, yet I was a great while ere I could credit anything of what the children and servants reported concerning the noises they heard in several parts of our house. Nay, after I had heard them myself, I was willing to persuade myself and them that it was only rats or weasels that disturbed us; and having been formerly troubled with rats, which were frighted away by sounding a horn, I caused a horn to be procured, and made them blow it all over the house. But from that night they began to blow, the noises were more loud and distinct, both day and night, than before; and that night we rose and went down, I was entirely convinced that it was beyond the power of any human creature to make such strange and various noises.

As to your questions, I will answer them particularly, but withal I desire my answer may satisfy none but yourself; for I would not have the matter imparted to any. We had both man and maid new this last Martinmas, yet I do not believe either of them occasioned the disturbance, both for the reason above mentioned, and because they were more affrighted than anybody else. Besides, we have often heard the noises when they were in the room by us; and the maid particularly was in such a panic that she was almost incapable of all business, nor durst ever go from one room to another, or stay by herself a minute after it began to be dark.

The man, Robert Brown, whom you well know, was most visited by it lying in the garret, and has been often frighted down bare-foot and almost naked, not daring to stay alone to put on his clothes; nor do I think, if he had power, he would be guilty of such villainy. When the walking was heard in the garret, Robert was in bed in the next room, in a sleep so sound that he never heard your father and me walk up and down, though we walked not softly, I am sure. All the family has heard it together, in the same room, at the same time, particularly at family prayers. It always seemed to all present in the same place at the same time, though often before any could say it is here, it would remove to another place.

All the family, as well as Robin, were asleep when your father and I went downstairs, nor did they wake in the nursery when we held the candle close by them, only we observed that Hetty trembled exceedingly in her sleep, as she always did, before the noise awakened her. It commonly was nearer her than the rest, which she took notice of and was much frightened, because she thought it had a particular spite at her. I could multiply particular instances, but I forbear. I believe your father will write to you about it shortly. Whatever may be the design of Providence in permitting these things, I cannot say. *Secret things belong to God;* but I entirely agree with you that it is our wisdom and duty to prepare seriously for all events. S. Wesley.

From Susannah Wesley to her brother Samuel.

Dear Brother, Epworth, January 24.

About the first of December a most terrible and astonishing noise was heard by a maidservant, as at the dining-room door, which caused the up-starting of her hair, and made her ears prick forth at an unusual rate. She said it was like the groans of one expiring. These so frighted her that for a great while she durst not go out of one room into another, after it began to be dark, without company. But, to lay aside jesting, which should not be done in serious matters, I assure you that from the first to the last of a lunar month the groans, squeaks, tinglings, and knockings were frightful enough.

Though it is needless for me to send you any account of what we all heard, my father himself having a larger account of the matter than I am able to give, which he designs to send you, yet, in compliance with your desire, I will tell you as briefly as I can what I heard of it. The first night I ever heard it, my sister Nancy and I were set in the dining-room. We heard something rush on the outside of the doors that opened into the garden, then three loud knocks, immediately after other three, and in half a minute the same number over our heads. We inquired whether anybody had been in the garden, or in the room above us, but there was nobody. Soon after, my sister Molly and I were up after all the family were abed, except my sister Nancy, about some business. We heard three bouncing thumps under our feet, which soon made us throw away our work and tumble into bed. Afterwards the tingling of the latch and warming-pan, and so it took its leave that night.

Soon after the above mentioned, we heard a noise as if a great piece of sounding metal was thrown down on the outside of our chamber. We, lying in the quietest part of the house, heard less than the rest for a pretty while; but the latter end of the night that Mr. Hoole sat up on, I lay in the nursery, where it was very violent. I then heard frequent knocks over and under the room where I lay and at the children's bed head, which was made of boards. It seemed to rap against it very hard and loud, so that the bed shook under them. I heard something walk by my bed-side, like a man in a long night-gown. The knocks were so loud that Mr. Hoole came out of their chamber to us. It still continued. My father spoke, but nothing answered. It ended that night with my father's particular knock, very fierce.

It is now pretty quiet, only at our repeating the prayers for the King and Prince, when it usually begins, especially when my father says: "Our most glorious Sovereign Lord," etc. This my father is angry at, and designs to say *three* instead of *two* for the royal family. We all heard the same noise, and at the same time, and as coming from the same place. To conclude this, it now makes its personal appearance; but of this more hereafter. Do not say one word of this to our folks, nor give the least hint.

I am your sincere friend and affectionate sister,

Susannah Wesley.

From Emilia (Emily) Wesley to her brother Samuel.

Dear Brother,
I thank you for your last, and shall give you what satisfaction is in my power concerning what has happened in our family. I am so far from being superstitious that I was too much inclined to infidelity, so that I heartly rejoice at having such an opportunity of convincing myself, past doubt or scruple, of the existence of some beings besides those we see. A whole month was sufficient to convince anybody of the reality of the thing, and to try all ways of discovering any trick, had it been possible for any such to have been used. I shall only tell you what I myself heard, and leave the rest to others.

My sisters in the paper chamber had heard noises and told me of them, but I did not much believe till one night, about a week after the groans were heard, which was the beginning, just after the clock had struck ten, I went downstairs to lock the doors, which I always do. Scarce had I got up the best stairs when I heard a noise like a person throwing down a vast coal in the middle of the fore kitchen, and all the splinters seemed to fly about from it. I was not much frighted, but went to my sister Suky, and we together went all over the low rooms, but there was nothing out of order.

Our dog was fast asleep, and our only cat in the other end of the house. No sooner was I got upstairs, and undressing for bed, but I heard a noise among many bottles that stand under the best stairs, just like the throwing of a great stone among them, which had broke them all to pieces. This made me hasten to bed; but my sister Hetty, who sits always to wait on my father going to bed, was still sitting on the lowest step on the garret stairs, the door being shut at her back, when soon after there came down the stairs behind her something like a man in a loose night-gown trailing after him, which made her fly rather than run to me in the nursery.

All this time we never told our father of it, but soon after we did. He smiled and gave no answer, but was more careful than usual, from that time, to see us in bed, imagining it to be some of us young women that sat up late and made a noise. His incredulity, and especially his imputing it to us, or our lovers, made me, I own, desirous of its continuance till he was convinced. As for my mother, she firmly believed it to be rats, and sent for a horn to blow them away. I laughed to think how wisely they were employed who were striving half a day to fright away Jeffrey, for that name I gave it, with a horn.

But whatever it was, I perceived it could be made angry. For from that time it was so outrageous there was no quiet for us after ten at night. I heard frequently, between ten and eleven, something like the quick winding-up of a jack, at the corner of the room by my bed's head, just like the running of the wheels and the creaking of the ironwork. This was the common signal of its coming. Then it would knock on the floor three times, then at my sister's bed's head in the same room, almost always three together, and then stay. The sound was hollow and loud, so as none of us could ever imitate.

It would answer to my mother if she stamped on the floor and bid it. It would knock when I was putting the children to bed, just under me where I sat. One time little Kesy, pretending to scare Patty, as I was undressing them, stamped with her foot on the floor, and immediately it answered with three knocks, just in the same place. It was more loud and fierce if anyone said it was rats, or anything natural.

I could tell you abundance more of it, but the rest will write, and therefore it would be needless. I was not much frighted at first, and very little at last; but it was never near me, except two or three times, and never followed me, as it did my sister Hetty. I have been with her when it has knocked under her, and when she has removed, has followed, and still kept just under her feet, which was enough to terrify a stouter person.

If you would know my opinion of the reason of this, I shall briefly tell you. I believe it to be witchcraft, for these reasons:

About a year since, there was a disturbance at a town near us that was undoubtedly witches; and if so near, why may they not reach us? Then my father had for several Sundays before its coming preached warmly against consulting those that are called cunning men, which our people are given to; and it had a particular spite at my father.

Besides, something was thrice seen. The first time by my mother, under my sister's bed, like a badger, only without any head that was discernible. The same creature was sat by the dining-room fire one evening; when our man went into the room, it ran by him through the hall under the stairs. He followed with a candle and searched, but it was departed. The last time he saw it in the kitchen like a white rabbit, which seems likely to be some witch; and I do so really believe it to be one that I would venture to fire a pistol at it if I saw it long enough. It has been heard by me and others since December. I have filled up all my room and have only time to tell you I am

Your loving sister,

Emilia Wesley.

Mr. Wesley's Journal

Transcribed by his son, John Wesley.

August 27, 1726.

[*An account of Noises and Disturbances in my House, at Epworth, Lincolnshire, in December and January, 1716.*]

From the first of December my children and servants heard many strange noises, groans, knockings, etc., in every storey and most of the rooms of my house. But I hearing nothing of it myself, they would not tell me for some time, because, according to the vulgar opinion, if it boded any ill to me, I could not hear it. When it increased and the family could not easily conceal it, they told me of it.

My daughters Susannah and Ann were below stairs in the dining-room, and heard, first at the doors, then over their heads, and the night after, a knocking under their feet, though nobody was in the chambers or below them. The like they and my servants heard in both the kitchens, at the door against the partition, and over them. The maidservants heard groans as of a dying man. My daughter Emilia coming downstairs to draw up the clock and lock the doors at ten at night, as usual, heard under the staircase a sound among some bottles there, as if they had been dashed to pieces; but when she looked, all was safe.

Something like the steps of a man was heard going up and down stairs at all hours of the night, and vast rumblings below stairs, and in the garrets. My man, who lay in the garret, heard someone come slaring through the garret to his chamber, rattling by his side, as if against his shoes, though he had none there; at other times walking up and down stairs, when all the house were in bed, and gobbling like a turkey cock. Noises were heard in the nursery and all the other chambers; knocking first at the feet of the bed and behind it, and a sound like that of dancing in a matted chamber next the nursery, when the door was locked and nobody in it.

My wife would have persuaded them it was rats within doors, and some unlucky people knocking without; till at last we heard several loud knocks in our own chamber, on my side of the bed; but till, I think, the 21st at night, I heard nothing of it. That night I was waked a little before one, by nine distinct, very loud knocks, which seemed to be in the next room to ours, with a sort of a pause at every third stroke. I thought it might be somebody without the house, and having got a stout mastiff, hoped he would soon rid me of it.

The next night I heard six knocks, but not so loud as the former. I know not whether it was in the morning after Sunday the 23d, when about seven my daughter Emily called her mother into the nursery and told her she might now hear the noises there. She went in and heard it at the bedsteads, then under the bed, then at the head of it. She knocked, and it answered her. She looked under the bed and thought something ran from thence, but could not well tell of what shape, but thought it most like a badger.

The next night but one, we were awaked about one by the noises, which were so violent it was in vain to think of sleep while they continued. I rose, and my wife would rise with me. We went into every chamber and downstairs; and generally as we went into one room, we heard it in that behind us, though all the family had been in bed several hours. When we were going downstairs, and at the bottom of them, we heard, as Emily had done before, a clashing among the bottles, as if they had been broke all to pieces, and another sound distinct from it, as if a peck of money had been thrown down before us. The same, three of my daughters heard at another time.

We went through the hall into the kitchen, when our mastiff came whining to us, as he did always after the first night of its coming; for then he barked violently at it, but was silent afterwards and seemed more afraid than any of the children. We still heard it rattle and thunder in every room above or behind us, locked as well as open, except my study, where as yet it never came. After two we went to bed and were pretty quiet the rest of the night.

Wednesday night, December 26, after or a little before ten, my daughter Emilia heard the signal of its beginning to play, with which she was perfectly acquainted: it was like the strong winding-up of a jack. She called us, and I went into the nursery, where it used to be most violent. The rest of the children were asleep. It began with knocking in the kitchen underneath, then seemed to be at the bed's feet, then under the bed, at last at the head of it. I went downstairs and knocked with my stick against the joists of the kitchen. It answered me as often and as loud as I knocked; but then I knocked as I usually do at my door, 1–23456–7, but this puzzled it, and it did not answer, or not in the same method, though the children heard it do the same exactly twice or thrice after.

I went upstairs and found it still knocking hard, though with some respite, sometimes under the bed, sometimes at the bed's head. I observed my children, that they were frighted in their sleep and trembled very much till it waked them. I stayed there alone, bid them go to sleep, and sat at the bed's feet by them, when the noise began again. I asked it what it was and why it disturbed innocent children and did not come to me in my study if it had anything to say to me. Soon after, it gave one knock on the outside of the house. All the rest were within, and knocked off for that night.

I went out of doors, sometimes alone, at others with company, and walked round the house, but could see or hear nothing. Several nights the latch of our lodging chamber would be lifted up very often, when all were in bed. One night, when the noise was great in the kitchen and on a deal partition and the door in the yard, the latch whereof was lifted up, my daughter Emilia went and held it fast on the inside, but it was still lifted up, and the door pushed violently against her, though nothing was to be seen on the outside.

When we were at prayers, and came to the prayers for King George and the Prince, it would make a great noise over our heads constantly, whence some of the family called it a Jacobite. I have been thrice pushed by an invisible power, once against the corner of my desk in the study, a second time against the door of the matted chamber, a third time against the right side of the frame of my study door, as I was going in.

I followed the noise into almost every room in the house, both by day and by night, with lights and without, and have sat alone for some time, and when I heard the noise, spoke to it to tell me what it was, but never heard any articulate voice, and only once or twice two or three feeble squeaks, a little louder than the chirping of a bird, but not like the noise of rats, which I have often heard.

I had designed on Friday, December the 28th, to make a visit to a friend, Mr. Downs, at Normandy, and stay some days with him, but the noises were so boisterous on Thursday night that I did not care to leave my family. So I went to Mr. Hoole, of Haxey, and desired his company on Friday night. He came; and it began after ten, a little later than ordinary. The younger children were gone to bed; the rest of the family and Mr. Hoole were together in the matted chamber. I sent the servants down to fetch in some fuel, went with them, and stayed in the kitchen till they came in. When they were gone, I heard loud noises against the doors and partition and at length the usual signal, though somewhat after the time. I had never seen it before, but knew it by the description my daughter had given me. It was much like the turning about of a windmill when the wind changes. When the servants returned, I went up to the company, who had heard the other noises below, but not the signal. We heard all the knocking as usual, from one chamber to another; but at its going off, like the rubbing of a beast against the wall; but from that time till January the 24th we were quiet.

Having received a letter from Samuel the day before, relating to it, I read what I had written of it to my family; and this day at morning prayer the family heard the usual knocks at the prayer for the King. At night they were more distinct, both in the prayer for the King and that for the Prince, and one very loud knock at the amen was heard by my wife and most of my children at the inside of my bed. I heard nothing myself. After nine, Robert Brown sitting alone by the fire in the back kitchen, something came out of the copper-hole like a rabbit, but less, and turned round five times very swiftly. Its ears lay flat upon its neck, and its little scut stood straight up. He ran after it with the tongs in his hands, but when he could find nothing, he was frightened and went to the maid in the parlour.

On Friday, the 25th, having prayers at church, I shortened, as usual, those in the family at morning, omitting the confession, absolution, and prayers for the King and Prince. I observed when this is done, there is no knocking. I therefore used them one morning for a trial; at the name of King George it began to knock and did the same when I prayed for the Prince. Two knocks I heard, but took no notice after prayers till after all who were in the room, ten persons besides me, spoke of it and said they heard it. No noise at all the rest of the prayers.

Sunday, January 27. Two soft strokes at the morning prayers for King George, above stairs.

Friday, December 21. Knocking I heard first, I think, this night; to which disturbances, I hope, God will in his good time put an end.

Sunday, December 23. Not much disturbed with the noises, that are now grown customary to me.

Wednesday, December 26. Sat up to hear noises. Strange! spoke to it; knocked off.

Friday, 28. The noises very boisterous and disturbing this night.

Saturday, 29. Not frighted with the continued disturbance of my family.

Tuesday, January 1, 1717. My family have had no disturbance since I went.

Memorandum by John Wesley

Of the general circumstances which follow, most, if not all, the family were frequent witnesses.

1. Presently after any noise was heard, the wind commonly rose and whistled very loud round the house, and increased with it.

2. The signal was given, which my father likens to the turning round of a windmill when the wind changes; Mr. Hoole (rector of Haxley), to the planing of deal boards; my sister, to the swift winding-up of a jack. It commonly began at the corner of the top of the nursery.

3. Before it came into any room, the latches were frequently lifted up, the windows clattered, and whatever iron or brass was about the chamber rung and jarred exceedingly.

4. When it was in any room, let them make what noise they would, as they sometimes did on purpose, its dead, hollow note would be clearly heard above them all.

5. It constantly knocked while the prayers for the King and Prince were repeating, and was plainly heard by all in the room but my father, and sometimes by him, as were also the thundering knocks at the amen.

6. The sound very often seemed in the air in the middle of a room, nor could they ever make any such themselves, by any contrivance.

7. Though it seemed to rattle down the pewter, to clap the doors, draw the curtains, kick the man's shoes up and down, etc., yet it never moved anything except the latches, otherwise than making it tremble; unless once, when it threw open the nursery door.

8. The mastiff, though he barked violently at it the first day he came, yet whenever it came after that, nay, sometimes before the family perceived it, he ran whining, or quite silent, to shelter himself behind some of the company.

9. It never came by day till my mother ordered the horn to be blown.

10. After that time scarce anyone could go from one room into another but the latch of the room they went to was lifted up before they touched it.

11. It never came once into my father's study till he talked to it sharply, called it *deaf and dumb devil,* and bid it cease to disturb the innocent children and come to him in his study if it had anything to say to him.

12. From the time of my mother's desiring it not to disturb her from five to six, it was never heard in her chamber from five till she came downstairs, nor at any other time when she was employed in devotion.

13. Whether our clock went right or wrong, it always came, as near as could be guessed, when by the night it wanted a quarter of ten.

Mrs. Wesley's Account to John.

August 27, 1726.

About ten days after Nanny Marshall had heard unusual groans at the dining-room door, Emily came and told me that the servants and children had been several times frightened with strange groans and knocking about the house. I answered that the rats John Maw had frightened from his house by blowing a horn there were come into ours, and ordered that one should be sent for. Molly was much displeased at it and said, if it was anything supernatural, it certainly would be very angry and more troublesome. However, the horn was blown in the garrets; and the effect was that, whereas before the noises were always in the night, from this time they were heard at all hours, day and night.

Soon after, about seven in the morning, Emily came and desired me to go into the nursery, where I should be convinced they were not startled at nothing. On my coming thither I heard a knocking at the feet, and quickly after at the head, of the bed. I desired, if it was a spirit, it would answer me: and knocking several times with my foot on the ground, with several pauses, it repeated under the sole of my feet exactly the same number of strokes, with the very same intervals. Kezzy, then six or seven years old, said: "Let it answer me too, if it can"; and stamping, the same sounds were returned that she made, many times successively.

Upon my looking under the bed, something ran out pretty much like a badger and seemed to run directly under Emily's petticoats, who sat opposite to me on the other side. I went out, and one or two nights after, when we were just got to bed, I heard nine strokes, three by three, on the other side of the bed, as if one had struck violently on a chest with a large stick. Mr. Wesley leapt up, called Hetty, who alone was up in the house, and searched every room in the house, but to no purpose. It continued from this time to knock and groan frequently at all hours, day and night, only I earnestly desired it might not disturb me between five and six in the evening, and there never was any noise in my room after during that time.

At other times I have often heard it over my mantel-tree, and once, coming up after dinner, a cradle seemed to be strongly rocked in my chamber. When I was in the nursery, it seemed in my chamber again. One night Mr. W. and I were waked by someone running down the garret stairs, then down the broad stairs, then up the narrow ones, then up the garret stairs, then down again, and so the same round. The rooms trembled as it passed along, and the doors shook exceedingly, so that the clattering of the latches was very loud.

Mr. W. proposing to rise, I rose with him and went down the broad stairs, hand in hand, to light a candle. Near the foot of them a large pot of money seemed to be poured out at my waist and to run jingling down my night-gown to my feet. Presently after, we heard the noise as of a vast stone thrown among several dozen of bottles which lay under the stairs: but upon looking no hurt was done. In the hall the mastiff met us, crying and striving to get between us. We returned up into the nursery, where the noise was very great. The children were all asleep, but panting, trembling, and sweating extremely.

Shortly after, on Mr. Wesley's invitation, Mr. Hoole stayed a night with us. As we were all sitting round the fire in the matted chamber, he asked whether that gentle knocking was *it?* I told him yes, and it continued the sound, which was much lower than usual. This was observable, that while we were talking loud in the same room, the noise, seemingly lower than any of our voices, was distinctly heard above them all. These were the most remarkable passages I remember, except such as were common to all the family.

Emily Wesley's Account to John.

About a fortnight after the time when, as I was told, the noises were heard, I went from my mother's room, who was just gone to bed, to the best chamber, to fetch my sister Suky's candle. When

I was there, the windows and doors began to jar, and ring exceedingly, and presently after I heard a sound in the kitchen as if a vast stone-coal had been thrown down and mashed to pieces. I went down thither with my candle and found nothing more than usual; but as I was going by the screen, something began knocking on the other side, just even with my head. When I looked on the inside, the knocking was on the outside of it; but soon as I could get round, it was at the inside again. I followed to and fro several times, till at last, finding it to no purpose and turning about to go away, before I was out of the room, the latch of the back kitchen door was lifted up many times. I opened the door and looked out, but could see nobody. I tried to shut the door, but it was thrust against me, and I could feel the latch, which I held in my hand, moving upwards at the same time. I looked out again, but finding it was labour lost, clapped the door to and locked it. Immediately the latch was moved strongly up and down, but I left it and went up the worst stairs, from whence I heard as if a great stone had been thrown among the bottles which lay under the best stairs. However, I went to bed.

From this time I heard it every night for two or three weeks. It continued a month in its full majesty, night and day. Then it intermitted a fortnight or more; and when it began again, it knocked only on nights and grew less and less troublesome, till at last it went quite away. Toward the latter end it used to knock on the outside of the house and seemed farther and farther off, till it ceased to be heard at all.

Molly Wesley's Account to John.

August 27.

I have always thought it was in November, the rest of our family think it was the 1st of December, 1716, when Nanny Marshall, who had a bowl of butter in her hand, ran to me and two or three more of my sisters in the dining-room and told us she had heard several groans in the hall, as of a dying man. We thought it was Mr. Turpine, who had the stone and used sometimes to come and see us. About a fortnight after, when my sister Suky and I were going to bed, she told me how she was frightened in the dining-room the day before by a noise, first at the folding door and then overhead. I was reading at the table, and had scarce told her I believed nothing of it when several knocks were given just under my feet. We both made haste into bed, and just as we laid down, the warming-pan by the bed-side jarred and rung, as did the latch of the door, which was lifted swiftly up and down; presently a great chain seemed to fall on the outside of the door (we were in the best chamber), the door, latch, hinges, the warming-pan, and windows jarred, and the house shook from top to bottom.

A few days after, between five and six in the evening, I was by myself in the dining-room. The door seemed to open, though it was still shut, and somebody walked in a night-gown trailing upon the ground (nothing appearing) and seemed to go leisurely round me. I started up and ran upstairs to my mother's chamber and told the story to her and my sister Emily. A few nights after, my father ordered me to light him to his study. Just as he had unlocked it, the latch was lifted up for him. The same (after we blew the horn) was often done to me, as well by day as by night. Of many other things all the family as well as me were witnesses.

My father went into the nursery from the matted chamber, where we were, by himself, in the dark. It knocked very loud on the press-bed head. He adjured it to tell him why it came, but it seemed to take no notice; at which he was very angry, spoke sharply, called it *deaf and dumb devil,* and repeated his adjuration. My sisters were terribly afraid it would speak. When he had done, it knocked his knock on the bed's head, so exceeding violently as if it would break it to shivers, and from that time we heard nothing till near a month after.

Suky Wesley's Account to John.

I believed nothing of it till about a fortnight after the first noises; then one night I sat up on purpose to hear it. While I was working in the best chamber and earnestly desiring to hear it, a knocking began just under my feet. As I knew the room below was locked, I was frightened and leapt into bed with all my clothes on. I afterwards heard, as it were, a great chain fall and after some time the usual noises at all hours of the day and night. One night, hearing it was most violent in the nursery, I resolved to lie there. Late at night several strong knocks were given on the two lowest steps of the garret stairs, which were close to the nursery door. The latch of the door then jarred and seemed to be swiftly moved to and fro and presently began knocking about a yard within the room on the floor. It then came gradually to sister Hetty's bed, who trembled strongly in her sleep. It beat very loud three strokes at a time on the bed's head. My father came and adjured it to speak, but it knocked on for some time and then removed to the room over, where it knocked my father's knock on the ground, as if it would beat the house down. I had no mind to stay longer, but got up and went to Sister Em and my mother, who were in her room. From thence we heard the noises again from the nursery. I proposed playing a game at cards, but we had scarce begun when a knocking began under our feet. We left off playing, and it removed again into the nursery, where it continued till toward morning.

Nancy Wesley's Account to John.

September 10.

The first noise my sister Nancy heard was in the best chamber, with my sister Molly and my sister Suky, soon after my father had ordered her to blow a horn in the garrets, where it was knocking violently. She was terribly afraid, being obliged to go in the dark, and, kneeling down on the stairs, desired that, as she acted not to please herself, it might have no power over her. As soon as she came into the room, the noise ceased, nor did it begin again till near ten; but then and for a good while it made much greater and more frequent noises than it had done before. When she afterwards came into the chamber in the day-time, it commonly walked after her from room to room. It followed her from one side of the bed to the other and back again, as often as she went back; and whatever she did which made any sort of noise, the same thing seemed just to be done behind her.

When five or six were set in the nursery together, a cradle would seem to be strongly rocked in the room over, though no cradle had ever been there. One night she was sitting on the press bed, playing at cards with some of my sisters, when my sister Molly, Etty, Patty, and Kezzy, were in the room, and Robert Brown. The bed on which my sister Nancy sat was lifted up with her on it. She leapt down and said " surely old Jeffrey would not run away with her." However, they persuaded her to sit down again, which she had scarce done, when it was again lifted up several times successively, a considerable height, upon which she left her seat and would not be prevailed upon to sit there any more.

Whenever they began to mention Mr. S., it presently began to knock and continued to do so till they changed the discourse. All the time my sister Suky was writing her last letter to him, it made a very great noise all round the room; and the night after she set out for London, it knocked till morning with scarce any intermission.

Mr. Hoole read prayers once, but it knocked as usual at the prayers for the King and Prince. The knockings at those prayers were only toward the beginning of the disturbances, for a week or thereabout.

The Rev. Mr. Hoole's Account.

September 16.

As soon as I came to Epworth, Mr. Wesley telling me he sent for me to conjure. I knew not what he meant, till some of your sisters told me what had happened and that I was sent for to sit up. I expected every hour, it being then about noon, to hear something extraordinary, but to no purpose. At supper, too, and at prayers all was silent, contrary to custom; but soon after, one of the maids, who went up to sheet a bed, brought the alarm that Jeffrey was come above stairs. We all went up; and, as we were standing round the fire in the east chamber, something began knocking just on the other side of the wall, on the chimney-piece, as with a key. Presently the knocking was under our feet. Mr. Wesley and I went down, he with a great deal of hope, and I with fear. As soon as we were in the kitchen, the sound was above us, in the room we had left. We returned up the narrow stairs and heard, at the broad stairs' head, someone slaring with their feet (all the family being now in bed beside us) and then trailing, as it were, and rustling with a silk night-gown. Quickly it was in the nursery, at the bed's head, knocking as it had done at first, three by three. Mr. Wesley spoke to it and said he believed it was the Devil, and soon after, it knocked at the window and changed its sound into one like the planing of boards. From thence it went on the outward south side of the house, sounding fainter and fainter, till it was heard no more.

I was at no other time than this during the noises at Epworth and do not now remember any more circumstances than these.

Robin Brown's Account to John.

The first time Robin Brown, my father's man, heard it was when he was fetching down some corn from the garrets. Somewhat knocked on a door just by him, which made him run away downstairs. From that time it used frequently to visit him in bed, walking up the garret stairs and in the garrets, like a man in jack-boots, with a night-gown trailing after him, then lifting up his latch and making it jar, and making presently a noise in his room like the gobbling of a turkey-cock, then stumbling over his shoes or boots by the bed-side. He was resolved once to be too hard for it and so took a large mastiff we had just got, to bed with him, and left his shoes and boots below stairs; but he might as well have spared his labour, for it was exactly the same thing whether any were there or no. The same sound was heard as if there had been forty pairs. The dog indeed was a great comfort to him, for as soon as the latch began to jar, he crept into bed, made such an howling and barking together, in spite of all the man could do, that he alarmed most of the family.

Soon after, being grinding corn in the garrets and happening to stop a little, the handle of the mill was turned round with great swiftness. He said nothing vexed him but that the mill was empty. If corn had been in it, Old Jeffrey might have ground his heart out of him; he would never had disturbed him.

One night, being ill, he was leaning his head upon the back kitchen chimney (the jam he called it) with the tongs in his hands when from behind the oven stop, which lay by the fire, somewhat came out like a white rabbit. It turned round before him several times and then ran to the same place again. He was frighted, started up, and ran with the tongs into the parlour (dining-room).

Narrative drawn up by John Wesley and published in the Arminian Magazine

When I was very young, I heard several letters read, wrote to my elder brother, by my father, giving an account of strange disturbances which were in his house at Epworth, in Lincolnshire.

When I went down thither in the year 1720, I carefully inquired into the particulars. I spoke to each of the persons who were then in the house and took down what each could testify of his or her own knowledge. The sum of which was this:

On December 2, 1716, while Robert Brown, my father's servant, was sitting with one of the maids, a little before ten at night, in the dining-room, which opened into the garden, they both heard one knocking at the door. Robert rose and opened it, but could see nobody. Quickly it knocked again and groaned. " It is Mr. Turpine," said Robert; " he has the stone, and uses to groan so." He opened the door again twice or thrice, the knocking being twice or thrice repeated. But still seeing nothing and being a little startled, they rose and went up to bed. When Robert came to the top of the garret stairs, he saw a hand mill, which was at a little distance, whirled about very swiftly. When he related this he said: "Naught vexed me but that it was empty. I thought if it had but been full of malt, he might have ground his heart out for me." When he was in bed, he heard, as it were, the gobbling of a turkey-cock, close to the bed-side; and soon after, the sound of one stumbling over his shoes and boots, but there were none there: he had left them below. The next day he and the maid related these things to the other maid, who laughed heartily and said: "What a couple of fools are you! I defy anything to fright me." After churning in the evening, she put the butter in the tray and had no sooner carried it into the dairy than she heard a knocking on the shelf where several puncheons of milk stood, first above the shelf, then below; she took the candle and searched both above and below, but, being able to find nothing, threw down butter, tray, and all, and ran away for life. The next evening, between five and six o'clock, my sister Molly, then about twenty years of age, sitting in the dining-room, reading, heard as if it were the door that led into the hall open and a person walking in that seemed to have on a silk night-gown rustling and trailing along. It seemed to walk round her, then to the door, then round again; but she could see nothing. She thought: "It signifies nothing to run away; for whatever it is, it can run faster than me." So she rose, put her book under her arm, and walked slowly away. After supper she was sitting with my sister Suky (about a year older than her) in one of the chambers, and telling her what had happened, she quite made light of it, telling her: "I wonder you are so easily frighted; I would fain see what would fright me." Presently a knocking began under the table. She took the candle and looked, but could find nothing. Then the iron casement began to clatter, and the lid of a warming-pan. Next the latch of the door moved, up and down without ceasing. She started up, leapt into the bed without undressing, pulled the bed-clothes over her head, and never ventured to look up till next morning. A night or two after, my sister Hetty, a year younger than my sister Molly, was waiting, as usual, between nine and ten, to take away my father's candle, when she heard one coming down the garret stairs, walking slowly by her, then going down the best stairs, then up the back stairs, and up the garret stairs. And at every step it seemed the house shook from top to bottom. Just then my father knocked. She went in, took his candle, and got to bed as fast as possible. In the morning she told this to my elder sister, who told her: " You know I believe none of these things. Pray let me take away the candle to-night, and I will find out the trick." She accordingly took my sister Hetty's place, and had no sooner taken away the candle than she heard a noise below. She hastened downstairs to the hall, where the noise was. But it was then in the kitchen. She ran into the kitchen, where it was drumming on the inside of the screen. When she went round, it was drumming on the outside, and so always on the side opposite to her. Then she heard a knocking at the back kitchen door. She ran to it, unlocked it softly and, when the knocking was repeated, suddenly opened it; but nothing was to be seen. As soon as she had shut it, the knocking began again; she opened it again, but could see nothing; when she went to shut the door, it was violently thrust against her; she let it fly open, but nothing appeared. She went again to shut it, and it was again thrust against her; but she set her knee and her shoulder to the door, forced it to, and turned the key. Then the knocking began again, but she let it go on and went up to bed. However, from that time she was thoroughly convinced that there was no imposture in the affair.

The next morning, my sister telling my mother what had happened, she said: " If I hear anything myself, I shall know how to judge." Soon after, she begged her to come into the nursery. She did and heard in the corner of the room, as it were, the violent rocking of a cradle, but no cradle had been there for some years. She was convinced it was preternatural and earnestly prayed it might not disturb her in her own chamber at the hours of retirement; and it never did. She now thought it was proper to tell my father. But he was extremely angry and said: " Suky, I am ashamed of you; these boys and girls fright one another, but you are a woman of sense and should know better. Let me hear of it no more." At six in the evening he had family prayers as usual. When he began the prayers for the King, a knocking began all round the room, and a thundering knock attended the amen. The same was heard from this time every morning and evening while the prayer for the King was repeated. As both my father and mother are now at rest, and incapable of being pained thereby, I think it my duty to furnish the serious reader with a key to this circumstance.

The year before King William died, my father observed my mother did not say amen to the prayer for the King. She said she could not; for she did not believe the Prince of Orange was the King. He vowed he never would cohabit with her till she did. He then took his horse and rode away, nor did she hear anything of him for a twelvemonth. He then came back and lived with her as before. But I fear his vow was not forgotten before God.

Being informed that Mr. Hoole, the vicar of Haxey (an eminently pious and sensible man), could give me some further information, I walked over to him. He said: "Robert Brown came over to me and told me your father desired my company. When I came, he gave me an account of all that had happened, particularly the knocking during family prayer. But that evening (to my great satisfaction) we had no knocking at all. But between nine and ten a servant came in and said: 'Old Jeffries is coming' (that was the name of one that died in the house), 'for I hear the signal.' This they informed me was heard every night about a quarter before ten. It was toward the top of the house, on the outside, at the north-east corner, resembling the loud creaking of a saw, or rather that of a windmill when the body of it is turned about in order to shift the sails to the wind. We then heard a knocking over our heads, and Mr. Wesley, catching up a candle, said: 'Come, sir, now you shall hear for yourself.' We went upstairs, he with much hope, and I (to say the truth) with much fear. When we came into the nursery, it was knocking in the nursery. And there it continued to knock, though we came in, particularly at the head of the bed (which was of wood), in which Miss Hetty and two of her younger sisters lay. Mr. Wesley, observing that they were much affected, though asleep, sweating and trembling exceedingly, was very angry and, pulling out a pistol, was going to fire at the place from whence the sound came. But I catched him by the arm and said: 'Sir, you are convinced this is something preternatural. If so, you can not hurt it, but you give it power to hurt you.' He then went close to the place and said sternly: 'Thou deaf and dumb devil, why dost thou fright these children, that can not answer for themselves? Come to me, in my study, that am a man!' Instantly it knocked his knock (the particular knock which he always used at the gate), as if it would shiver the board in pieces, and we heard nothing more that night." Till this time my father had never heard the least disturbances in his study. But the next evening, as he attempted to go into his study (of which none had any key but himself), when he opened the door, it was thrust back with such violence as had like to have thrown him down. However, he thrust the door open and went in. Presently there was knocking, first on one side, then on the other; and after a time, in the next room, wherein my sister Nancy was. He went into that room and (the noise continuing) adjured it to speak; but in vain. He then said: "These spirits love darkness: put out the candle, and perhaps it will speak"; she did so, and he repeated his adjuration; but still there was only knocking and no articulate sound. Upon this he said: "Nancy, two Christians are an overmatch for the Devil. Go all of you downstairs; it may be, when I am alone, he will have courage to speak." When she was gone, a thought came in, and he said: "If thou art the spirit of my son Samuel, I pray knock three knocks and no more." Immediately all was silence, and there was no more knocking at all that night. I asked my sister Nancy (then about fifteen years old) whether she was not afraid when my father used that adjuration? She answered she was sadly afraid it would speak when she put out the candle; but she was not at all afraid in the day-time when it walked after her as she swept the chambers, as it constantly did, and seemed to sweep after her. Only she thought he might have done it for her and saved her the trouble.

By this time all my sisters were so accustomed to these noises that they gave them little disturbance. A gentle tapping at their bed head usually began beween nine and ten at night. They then commonly said to each other: " Jeffrey is coming: it is time to go to sleep." And if they heard a noise in the day and said to my youngest sister: " Hark, Kezzy, Jeffrey is knocking above," she would run upstairs and pursue it from room to room, saying she desired no better diversion.

A few nights after, my father and mother were just gone to bed, and the candle was not taken away, when they heard three blows and a second and a third three, as it were with a large oaken staff struck upon a chest which stood by the bed-side. My father immediately arose, put on his night-gown, and, hearing great noises below, took the candle and went down; my mother walked by his side. As they went down the broad stairs, they heard as if a vessel full of silver was poured upon my mother's breast and ran jingling down to her feet. Quickly after there was a sound as if a large iron ball was thrown among many bottles under the stairs, but nothing was hurt. Soon after, our large mastiff dog came and ran to shelter himself between them. While the disturbances continued, he used to bark and leap and snap, on one side and the other, and that frequently before any person in the room heard any noise at all. But after two or three days he used to tremble, and creep away before the noise began. And by this the family knew it was at hand; nor did the observation ever fail. A little before my father and mother came into the hall, it seemed as if a very large coal was violently thrown upon the floor and dashed all in pieces, but nothing was seen. My father then cried out: " Suky, do you not hear? All the pewter is thrown about the kitchen." But when they looked, all the pewter stood in its place. There then was a loud knocking at the back door. My father opened it, but saw nothing. It was then at the fore door. He opened that, but it was still lost labour. After opening first the one, then the other, several times, he turned and went up to bed. But the noises were so violent all over the house, that he could not sleep till four in the morning.

Several gentlemen and clergymen now earnestly advised my father to quit the house. But he constantly answered: "No; let the Devil flee from me: I will never flee from the Devil." But he wrote to my eldest brother at London to come down. He was preparing so to do when another letter came, informing him the disturbances were over, after they had continued (the latter part of the time day and night) from the second of December to the end of January.

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